

# **SYMBOLIC POLITICS AND THE ACEHNESE ETHNIC WAR IN INDONESIA**



## **TESIS**

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## Abstract

The ethnic war in Aceh territory killed 13.000 to 50.000 of people and it remains problematic, especially in the 1950s, 1970s, and the end of 1990s. This thesis explores whether the symbolic politics theory of ethnic war, which was originally designed to explain conflict in the post-Communist societies of Eastern Europe, is also successful for explaining ethnic war and the subsequent peace in areas like Aceh where traditional social structures continued to exist. Facts support the hypotheses of symbolist theory. On the first two cases, myths justifying hostility were strong on both sides of the Acehnese and the Javanese Indonesian national government, the result of decades of conflict between Javanese national authorities and the Acehnese societies in Aceh territory. Ethnic fears, opportunity reasons, hostile feelings, chauvinist mobilization by ethnic elites, and security dilemma dynamics were also taken into account on the Acehnese ethnic conflict. On the other hand, the symbolist theory is also effective for explaining ethnic subsequent peace in the reform period (1998-recent). Hostile myths and fears did present, but the violence did not emerge because both elites chose not to let the conflict continues. The opportunity to mobilize for both elites did not present and therefore hostile mass conflict did not escalate. Recognizing this unique conflict involves identifying the patterns of their attachment to the traditional social structures, the sultanates and the *ulama* (the Islamic scholar).

## **Abstraksi**

Konflik etnis di wilayah Aceh telah membunuh 13.000 sampai 50.000 orang dan tetap problematic, terutama pada tahun 1950an, 1970an, dan pada akhir tahun 1990an. Tesis ini menganalisis apakah teori simbolik politik dalam konflik atau perang etnis, yang pada awalnya dirancang untuk menjelaskan perang etnis dalam masyarakat post-Komunis di Eropa Timur, juga sukses menjelaskan perang etnis dan perdamaian di daerah-daerah seperti Aceh yang struktur sosial tradisionalnya tetap ada. Fakta-fakta menunjukkan terbuktinya hipotesis teori simbolis. Dalam dua studi kasus pertama, mitos yang menjustifikasi permusuhan sangat kuat pada kedua belah pihak antara orang Aceh dan pemerintah Jawa Indonesia, hasil dari beberapa decade konflik antara otoritas nasional Jawa dan masyarakat Aceh di wilayah Aceh. Ketakutan etnis, alasan kesempatan, perasaan permusuhan, mobilisasi chauvinis oleh para elit etnis, dan dinamika dilemma keamanan juga turut berkontribusi dalam menjelaskan konflik etnis Aceh. Pada sisi lain, teori simbolis juga efektif untuk menjelaskan perdamaian sesudah perang pada periode reformasi (1998-sekarang). Mitos permusuhan dan ketakutan memang terlihat, tapi kekerasan tidak terjadi karena elit dari kedua belah pihak memilih untuk tidak membiarkan konflik tidak berlanjut. Kesempatan utk memobilisasi bagi elit dari kedua belah pihak tidak terlihat dan oleh karena itu konflik permusuhan massa tidak tereskalasi. Mengenali keunikan konflik ini mencakup pengidentifikasian pola-pola keterkaitan mereka pada struktur sosial tradisional, ulama dan sultan.

## Table of Contents

	Pages
Title page	i
Thesis Originality page (Pernyataan Keaslian Tesis)	ii
Approval Thesis Page (Pengesahan Tesis)	ii
Acknowledgement and Dedication (Persembahan)	iv
Abstract	vi
Abstraksi	vii
List of Tables	xii
List of Figures	xiii
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
A. Introduction	1
B. The importance of the thesis	7
C. Arguments (Thesis statement)	7
D. Methodology and data collection	8
E. Hypothesis	9
F. The plan of the thesis	14
<b>2. Literature review</b>	<b>15</b>
A. Introduction	15
B. Interpretations of the ethnic conflict	17
C. Rational choice theory	19
a. Strengths of rational choice theory	24
b. Weakness of rational choice theory	27
	viii



c. Inapplicability of rational choice theory to the Acehese conflicts	28
D. Psychological approaches	30
a. Strengths of psychological approaches	32
b. Weakness of psychological approaches	33
c. Inapplicability of psychological approaches to the Acehese conflicts	35
E. Symbolic politics theory	37
a. Strengths of symbolic politics theory	39
b. Weakness of symbolic politics theory	42
c. Applicability of symbolic politics theory to the Acehese conflicts	44
F. Conclusion	45
<b>3. Indonesia and the Acehese rebellions</b>	<b>48</b>
A. Introduction	48
B. Geography and ethnicity in Indonesia	48
C. The politics and ideology in Indonesia	51
D. Ideological debate between the Islamic and secular nationalist groups	54
E. The Origins of the Acehese rebellions	58
a. The <i>Darul Islam</i> movement under Daud Bereueh leadership	59
b. Free Aceh Movement under Soeharto's regime of the New Order era (1969-1998)	61
c. Free Aceh Movement in reformation era (1998 - now)	67
F. Conclusion	71
<b>4. The Acehese conflicts under Soekarno's period</b>	<b>74</b>
A. Introduction	74

B. Myths justifying hostility	75
C. Fears of extinction	84
D. Opportunity to mobilization	89
E. Mass hostility	92
F. Hostile mobilization (The process of mobilization for war)	96
G. Conclusion	103
<b>5. The Acehese conflicts under Soeharto's period (The New Order era)</b>	<b>106</b>
A. Introduction	106
B. Myths justifying hostility	107
C. Fears of extinction	113
D. Opportunity to mobilization	117
E. Mass hostility	119
F. Hostile mobilization (The process of mobilization for war)	122
G. Conclusion	129
<b>6. The Acehese subsequent peace after 1998 reform period</b>	<b>132</b>
A. Introduction	132
B. Myths justifying hostility	134
C. Fears of extinction	137
D. Opportunity to mobilization	142
E. Chauvinist mobilization and the clashes	146
F. Conclusion	150

<b>7. Conclusion</b>	153
A. Introduction	153
B. Assessment of the symbolic politics theory on the Acehese conflicts	153
a. Assessment of the theory on the Acehese conflict under Soekarno period	153
b. Assessment of the theory on the Acehese conflict under Soeharto period	156
c. The Acehese subsequent peace after the 1998 reform period	159
C. Strengths and weaknesses of the symbolic politics theory	162
a. Strengths of the symbolic politics theory	162
b. Weaknesses of the symbolic politics theory	164
D. Implications	166
<b>8. References</b>	168

## **List of tables**

Table 3.1 Major Parties in Indonesian and Recent Parliamentary Elections Result (Percent of Vote)	56
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## **List of Figures**

Figure 1.1 The GAM's flag as the fighters' symbol of freedom and independent	6
Figure 2.1 A fighter risking his life securing the GAM's flag	35
Figure 2.2 The GAM's supporter provoke the emotions of the Indonesian military	36
Figure 3.1 The map of Indonesia	50
Figure 3.2 The Political map in Indonesia in 1955	55
Figure 5.1 The flag of GAM	109
Figure 5.2 The flag of the Aceh government Kingdom (1511-1530)	110
Figure 5.3 The flag of Ottoman Empire	111

# INTRODUCTION







argues that a nation is a modern cultural artifact that arose in the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, he gives his definition for nation that is “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” Anderson continues to explain that the nation is imagined in a way that members will never know, meet, or even hear each other, but he said that “in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”<sup>8</sup> Anderson then recognizes that a nation is limited and has flexible boundaries.

Daud Bereueh uses Islam as the chosen symbol that could unite Aceh, even a whole ex-East Indies territory and its community. His motivation to create an Islamic nation is due to his own cultural roots as a strong believer of Islam and because most of the ex-East Indies people were Muslim. It makes sense that Bereueh imagined a unity of an Islamic community (*ummah*) under a nation. Therefore, he convinced his group and justified any attempt to defend the idea of Aceh nation based on Islamic value as a holy purpose in the name of God. However, Soekarno, the first Indonesian president and a Javanese, challenged this effort by creating a more secular-nationalist nation of “Indonesia” that covers all the territory of ex-East Indies based on *Pancasila* regardless of religion, original region, or ethnicity. Both leaders had manipulated their followers to defend their personal and cultural feeling of belonging to their own nation. The Clash of

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 13.!

imagined communities between the Acehnese and the Indonesian government was unavoidable. The Acehnese attachment to Islam and Islamic nation was taken for granted, and thus they were willing to hate, kill and even die for the idea of the imagined Islamic nation.

In line with Daud Brereueh, Hasan di Tiro also manipulated the Acehnese personal and cultural feeling for an independent Aceh. His imagined community was an independent Aceh separated from Indonesia that was dominated by the Javanese ethnic group. He glorifies the Aceh Kingdom before the Aceh War in 1873. He convinced the Acehnese because he was the heir of the Acehnese hero and Islamic scholar (the *ulama*), Cik di Tiro. He combined the idea of an independent Aceh nation based on ethnicity and Islam values. This idea was also taken for granted by the Acehnese because the Acehnese followed their traditional leader (the Sultan and the *ulama*) of Hasan di Tiro as their loyal client to the patron (the Sultan and *Ulama*). The formation of GAM by Hasan di Tiro, as an heir of Acehnese Sultan and *ulama*, is a fact that the Acehnese have taken for granted the idea of an Aceh nation to set them free from the neo-colonial Indonesia. Another example is the GAM's flag as a symbol of the Acehnese pride as a nation who pursued freedom and independent from Indonesia state, as shown above:

Figures 1.1 The GAM's flag as the fighters' symbol of freedom and independent



Source: <http://www.achehtimes.com/photos/gam/gam01/widowsdefend.htm> (retrieved at March 20, 2008).

Soeharto, the Indonesian second president, who was a Javanese, crushed the idea of Aceh separation as an independent Aceh. He used *Pancasila* (a secular state foundation) as a symbol of Indonesian state to justify his action to crush Hasan Tiro and GAM. The leaders from both sides manipulated their intra-group and provoked them to take for granted the idea of nation or the creation of new nation. Hence, the followers who were attached and devoted themselves to the cultural myth and symbols like the flag or contending flag were willing to die for their nation's flag. In this sense, conflict was unavoidable.

In sum, the Acehnese ethnic conflict is about the politics of myth of a nation and ideological symbol of ethnic movement. The Acehnese rebellion from 1953 to the 1998 reform period in Indonesia is based on the dynamic of the myth and symbol of nation and triggered the Acehnese ethnic conflicts. The elite actors from both ethnic groups evoked the myth and symbols to start and end the conflict or war. In other words, the leaders





politics theory by examining myths, fears, opportunities, hostile feelings, and hostile mobilization (hypotheses) on these three cases. These particular indicators are the matters that I will focus on the literature studies.

#### E. Hypothesis

I focus on the essential conditions for ethnic conflict or war of the symbolic politics theory through myths, fears, opportunity, hostile feelings, and hostile mobilization on the three cases as mentioned above. The first indicator is the myth justifying hostility (S1). The myth-symbols complex becomes one of the key aspects that are aggravating hostility through chauvinism or warrior (leader) ethos, which they believe that their own group is greater and better than others. The myths can be re-portrayed by elites to create such hostile conditions. Using the myth-symbol complex that is already familiar, the elite uses and propagates these myths as a way to gain justification. For instance, a myth of *Perang Sabil* (Holy War) was used as a means to fight in the name of Islamic religion against the colonialists. This myth has been exaggerated to justify the hostile situation and mobilize the ethnic war. The myths should present the perspective from one group that justifies the interest of ethnic domination and the other ethnic group who opposes it.

The next condition is the existence of ethnic fear (S2), where the ethnic group fears their existence is at risk. This condition creates an unfriendly environment for the other groups. These fears are inflated by emotions and feelings concerning who are members of the groups and who are not. These psychological developments justify the strength of ethnic fear to provoke ethnic mobilization and violence. Here, the myth-symbol complex plays an important role in exposing that one group is a victim or









war or negotiations. And if war is the chosen one, then usually the leaders put their blame on the rival group. The leaders usually demonize the rivalry groups for their own goals. Violent provocations by the extremist group begin with the cycle of violence by radicalizing opinion and creating symbols for future use. If the rival group responds in kind, a security dilemma spiral fed by violent propaganda takes off.

At this view, I argue that symbolic politics theory should be tested to explain broader cases, especially in Southeast Asia because it will give broader explanatory power of the theory. Thus, based on this research background, symbolic politics theory becomes the model to be tested in the Acehnese ethnic war and the subsequent peace.

Seeing these required conditions of ethnic war, I will test the symbolic politics hypothesis based on the following issues:

- a. Myths justifying hostility must be present on at least one side in Indonesia, and probably on both (S1).
- b. Fears of group extinction must be present on at least one side in Indonesia, and possibly on both (S2).
- c. The opportunity to mobilize and fight must be present for both sides in Indonesia (S3).
- d. There must be evidence of hostile attitudes between the Acehnese and Indonesian government (S4).
- e. The Acehnese and Indonesian government must have mobilized around mutually incompatible political programs aimed at political dominance, at least in Aceh territory, as a result of the manipulation by leaders or counter-elites of ethnic myths and symbols (S5).

## F. The plan of the thesis

For this research, I begin with chapter two by laying out the contending theories of the ethnic conflicts such as the rational choice and the psychological approach, the strengths and weaknesses, and the inapplicability of these theories to the Acehnese conflicts. Furthermore, I explain the details of the symbolic politics theory of ethnic conflict or war, explaining how the passionate politics of ethnic symbolism can lead to war and why it so often does not, the strengths and weaknesses, and the applicability of this theory to the Acehnese conflicts.

The main parts of this thesis research that follows is a series of case studies that explain how these ideas illuminate the causes of ethnic wars in Aceh in several different regimes. In the chapter three, I explain the political dynamic in Indonesia since 1945. In this chapter, I explain the contexts of the politics in Indonesia and how these political situations related to the Acehnese rebellions. I begin with the elite-led conflicts of the Acehnese rebellion in 1953 under Daud Bereueh leadership and in 1976 to 1998 period under Hasan di Tiro leadership in chapter four and chapter five, respectively. Chapter six considers the peace subsequent after the 1998 reform period a peace process that is also an elite-led process. Chapter seven sums up the lessons learned, especially the assessment of the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese conflicts. After the assessment, I continue to explain about the theoretical and policy implications.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **A. Introduction**

This chapter focuses on theoretical tracking of the motivation, process, and the result of the ethnic conflict. This theoretical tracking is significance in order to get a better understanding of why and how ethnic conflict is happening in Aceh. The mainstream theory in explaining ethnic conflict is rational choice theory and another theory is the psychological approach. However, these theory could not explain comprehensively the ethnic conflict and thus, a more comprehensive conceptual theory in understanding the motivation of ethnic conflict or war is that the symbolic politics theory.

The symbolic politics theory is more comprehensive in analyzing ethnic conflict or war because the symbolic politics theory is a combination of the adequate explanation of the rational choice and the psychological theory. If we only utilize the rational choice theory, which means that the explanation for Aceh was that, the violence was a product of the security dilemma. However, that would, in turn, mean that we'd see the political agenda and choices of the elites or politicians that involved in this conflicts, and we don't see any political action based on the emotional or ideological expressions. For example, on the Acehnese ethnic conflicts, we would see the self-interest of the Javanese Indonesian government such as the transmigration program for the Javanese to Aceh territory, and at the same time we would not recognize that transmigration program is a symbol of the Javanese domination over the Acehnese demographically. Hence, the rationalist theory could not account an emotional based political agenda or programs.

On the other hand, if we adopt Psychological approach on the Acehnese ethnic conflicts then we would see the tools or devices that could trigger conflict. For example, flag or contending flag signed a superiority from a nation over the other nation and even negative feelings toward the other ethnic group. The GAM's flag aimed to shows their existence and superiority over the Javanese Indonesian government and even more the GAM's flag as a justification of their hostile feelings toward the neo-colonial Javanese Indonesian people. However, we could not see the myths and symbols that produce hatred lead to conflict because the recent leaders or elites to lead to ethnic conflict should activate those myths and symbols.

While, if we use the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese ethnic conflict then we would see the elites' political agenda and choices that involved in this conflicts and myths or symbols as devices for the elites that produce hostile situations and thus, the elite actors activates the myths and symbols as their devices to create hatred that certainly lead to ethnic conflict. It means that the symbolic politics theory combines both theory of rationalist and psychological approach on the ethnic conflicts. For example, the Hasan di Tiro had a political agenda to break away Aceh from Indonesia and thus, he use the GAM's flag as his device to create a symbol of the Acehnese freedom or nationalism ideology that lead to ethnic conflict with the Javanese Indonesian government.

I will discuss the three contending theories of ethnic conflict or war, which are the rational choice, the psychological, and the symbolic politics theory by explaining the main arguments, the strong and weaknesses, and the inapplicability or the applicability of these theories to the Acehnese conflicts. In this research, I will use the symbolic politics theory in analyzing the Acehnese conflicts because this theory has more power ability

than the rational choice and the psychological approaches. The symbolic politics theory succeeds in examining the ethnic conflict in Aceh by explaining the political agenda and choices of the elites or politicians that involved in this conflicts, which is the main arguments of the rational choice theory, and the actors' strategy and devices to trigger conflicts, which is the argument of the psychological approach. It implies that is the symbolic politics theory succeeds to recognize the motivations, the strategy, and the devices of the actors to activate an ethnic conflict or war because without recognizing these aspects, the ethnic conflict or war will never been occur.

#### B. Interpretations of the ethnic conflict

Three major different views have dominated the interpretation of ethnic war or conflict. One is the rational choice theory, which focuses on the self-interest foundation for ethnic group formations. The elites gain power through mobilization of certain ethnic groups to pursue the elites' goals. Thus, ethnic war is the result of the competing economic group interests. As shown in works by Ted Robert Gurr (1970), Robert H. Bates (1983; 1998; 2000), Ernest Gellner (1997), Benedict Anderson (1983; in Hutchinson, J. & Smith, A. (Eds.), 1994; 1998), Dennis Chong (2000), Ravi Bhavnani (2006), James Fearon and David Laitin (1996), Barbara F. Walter (2004), and David Lake and Donald Rothchild (1996).

The second major view is the psychological approach, which emphasizes superiority, prejudice, and negative feelings toward the other ethnic groups. Stuart J. Kaufman acknowledges three main theories of psychological approach, which are



















recognize the violence, so even if they are unsure about which side provoked it, they can rationally intensify their fear that the other group might be harmful. Consequently, the mass may rationally support policies that provoke conflict, war or even genocide, calculating that the costs of violence are lower than the costs of facing vulnerable violence. At this point, rational choice theory can explain the self-interest of actors as maximizers of group potential.

Another explanation of the conflict process is found in Fearon's work about international conflict that states that uncertainty and security dilemma can create conflict. Fearon's work explains how conflict arises because of misinformation or propaganda. Uncertainty is a key concept in explaining misinformation because uncertainty create and often overestimate about the rival group's resentment and thus, uncertainty can lead to conflict in response.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, Lake and Rothchild explain that the conflicted ethnic groups are uncertain about the result of conflict and thus the group calculating to be the loser may not understand how to avoid conflict by compromising beforehand.<sup>40</sup>

The next explanation from Russell Hardin (1995) about conflict is the existence of security dilemma. Security dilemma arises because of no certainty of trustable commitment between groups. It is very possible that in the future one group may break the commitment to another group. Thus, military action often provokes a security

<sup>39</sup> James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (1995): 379-414.!

<sup>40</sup> David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict," *International Security* 21, no. 2 (1996): 41-75.!





Thus, the rational choice theory could not exactly explain the Acehese ethnic wars in Indonesia. One could use the symbolic politics theory to analyze how the Acehese ethnic wars began, interpret the nature and development of the conflicts, and predict the future of the Acehese ethnic wars.

Fearon and Laitin remark that nonviolent and cooperative interactions are more universal than violence between groups. Collaborative alliances are one form of cooperative relations and thus may be more expected than not. Yet, they do not base their assumption of cooperation on groups' shared criticism and objectives. Instead, the dynamics of spiral equilibrium point to the minority groups' fear of increased violence by central government as a starting point. This fear then compels minorities to cooperate, which may take the shape of signing ceasefires with the government as a means to minimize tensions. It also may compel them to form alliances with one another in an attempt to formally influence the actions of neighboring ethnic armies.<sup>43</sup> However, the fact that conflict still exists is proof that collaborative alliances between ethnic groups are vulnerable. This vulnerability arises because ethnic groups have their myths that are exaggerated as a device to fight against the other groups, such as warrior ethos.

c. Inapplicability of rational choice theory to the Acehese conflicts

Concerning the argument from Anderson of imagined political community; rational choice theory is inapplicable because Indonesia as a single “imagined political community” has failed because of the extreme differences on cultural feeling of

<sup>43</sup> James D. Fearon, and David D. Laitin. "Explaining Interethnic Cooperation." *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 4 (1996): 715-735. See also James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (1995): 379-414.!







a. Strengths of psychological approach

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 145-147.!





Figure 2.1 A fighter risking his life securing the GAM's flag



Source: <http://www.achehtimes.com/photos/gam/gam03/index.htm> (retrieved at March 20, 2008).

Here, political choice is generally an emotional expression and politics are about manipulating the emotions of people as individuals and as a group. Furthermore, symbols exist as devices for these manipulations. Therefore, the symbolic politics theory is more coherent in a way that the theory fills the gaps between the existence of symbols as ethnic identity and emotions as a political choice's expression.

c. Inapplicability of the psychological theory in the Acehese conflicts

Psychological theory focuses on the importance of the emotions through myth-symbols, such as the flag. The flag or contending flag, as a certain group symbol, can provoke a sense of competition of superiority, domination and emotions of certain ethnic groups. In Aceh, Free Aceh Movement (GAM) used the flag as the symbol of freedom to fight against the Indonesian national government including the Indonesian military. The GAM uses the flag to provoke emotions of the Acehese and the rival group, which is the Indonesian national government and its military, to show their superiority and its political dominance in their own territory. The flag obviously is an effective tool that used is



by GAM elites or politicians like Hasan di Tiro, the leader of GAM, to mobilize the Acehnese to fight against the Indonesian national government and its military.

Figure 2.2 The GAM's supporter provoke the emotions of the Indonesian military



Source: <http://www.achehtimes.com/photos/gam/gam03/onguard.htm>. (Retrieved at March 20, 2008).

The image above shows that the supporters of the GAM to provoke the emotions of the Indonesian military and to show the GAM domination in Aceh territory use the GAM flag. Here, the flag of GAM is only a device for the actors to provoke conflicts. It implies that it is the actors who should activate the emotions through the flag myth-symbols to trigger the conflict or war. Thus, emotions and myth-symbols cannot instantly be used as factors that trigger the conflict or war. The psychological approach, in Acehnese ethnic conflicts can only be used because the role of emotions is very important as a device for actors to set up a conflict. It implies that the psychological approach of emotions is inapplicable in analyzing the Acehnese ethnic conflicts.

### E. Symbolic politics theory

This theory was originally taken from Murray Edelman's book on the conception of myths and symbols.<sup>58</sup> Edelman argues that politicians or elites can manipulate ethnic myths and symbols to evoke emotional responses in their followers, thus motivating them to change their preferences to align with the superficial good, or need, of the ethnic group. Hence, Edelman is combining his idea with Smith's concept about the importance of a myth-symbol complex to explain who a group's members are, its nations and history, or the meaning of being a member of an ethnic group. He also includes Roger Peterson's idea about the importance of emotions in manipulating people's objectives and their preferences and the role of emotion in politics. Here, ethnic wars clearly involve emotions to demonize the other ethnic groups, which can lead to a hostile situation and furthermore, the ethnic conflicts or wars.

Stuart J. Kaufman explains that ethnic wars are the result of the mobilization of myths and symbols.<sup>59</sup> For example, a flag has an attractiveness to evoke emotions of an ethnic group or a nation, and a flag as the symbol that has its own myths can lead to conflict and war. The key assumption of this theory is that “people make political choices

<sup>58</sup> Murray Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence* (Chicago, IL: Markham Publishing Company, 1971).!

<sup>59</sup> Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Kaufman, Stuart J. "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice? Testing Theories of Extreme Ethnic Violence" *International Security* 30, no. 4 (2006a): 45-86; Kaufman, Stuart J., Satoshi Machida, and Yu Wang. "Symbolic Politics and Ethnic Conflict in Malaysia and the Philippines" *International Studies Association Annual Meeting*, San Diego, California, 2006b, and Stuart J. Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics and Ethnic War in the Philippines" *International Studies Association Annual Meeting*, Chicago, Illinois, 2007. !





the important role of emotions as part of psychological approaches. Emotions in a form of competition of status through political domination and fear of extinction are very effective in stimulating people to have conflict or war against the rival group. Therefore, symbolic politics theory is more satisfactory in explaining the ethnic conflict or war.

The next strong point of the symbolic politics theory is that symbolic politics theory refers to political activity focused on arousing people emotions rather than addressing interests. It implies that the symbolic politics theory addressing the weakness of rationalist theory and psychological adequate explanation.

The weakness of rational choice theory is that political choices are not based on the rational interests. The political choice is often driven by emotional considerations rather than the cost-benefit calculation. Even Kaufman explains that emotions change people preferences.<sup>63</sup> More fascinatingly, an insight looking from a rationalist theorist, Samuel Popkin, on his book entitled *The reasoning Voter*, mention that “data presented in an emotionally compelling way may be given greater consideration and more weight than data that is statistically more valid, but emotionally neutral.”<sup>64</sup> It implies that emotional decisions on political choices are stronger than rational decisions. In short, people are more likely to base their decisions on emotion.

In this sense, Kaufman argues, “people choose by responding to the most emotionally potent symbol evoked.”<sup>65</sup> He continues to argue that political choice is mostly

<sup>63</sup> Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*, 27-28.!

<sup>64</sup> Samuel L. Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns* (the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition) (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 16.!

<sup>65</sup> Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*, 28.!



emotion of myths, symbols, and fears of extinction of the member of ethnic group that makes the supporters follow the predatory elites goals. Furthermore, symbolic politics theory could explain the extreme ethnic cleavages in Sudan and Rwanda. This extreme cleavage arises because the elites put so much effort and so many resources into making symbolic appeals. The result was that the symbolic politics theory is more successful than the rational choice theory in explaining the Sudan and Rwanda ethnic war.

The symbolic politics theory is shown to have more power than rational choice and psychological theory in explaining the ethnic conflict or war, the deadliest ethnic violence, and even the ethnic peace, as illustrated in the cases of Syria, the post-Communist societies of Eastern Europe, Palestinian-Israel, and the Philippines. The symbolic politics theory could even explain the extreme ethnic violence in Sudan and Rwanda by comparing it to the explanation of rational choice theory in the same case of Sudan and Rwanda. In the comparison case of Malaysia and the Philippines, symbolic politics theory could satisfyingly investigate the reason for conflict or war in the Philippines and why in Malaysia the ethnic conflict did not take place.

#### b. Weaknesses of symbolic politics theory

Despite the strong elements of the symbolic politics theory, this theory has some weaknesses. The symbolic politics theory has not become a theory that can explain most of the ethnic conflicts or wars around the world. Hence, this theory needs further explanation and more analysis toward the phenomena of the ethnic war. The most significant testing on the symbolic politics theory was in post-communist countries in the Balkans. However, the rest of the cases have not been representative because the

cases were investigated in very small number and only for certain ethnic war events. Therefore, this theory needs to be tested further through much research to prove its explanatory power of the ethnic war.

One significant weakness of the symbolic politics theory researches mostly only analyzes conflict, war or even the most extreme ethnic violence-notably by Stuart Kaufman (1998, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2007). However, only in Malaysia does the symbolic politics approach explain the ethnic peace. This fact shows that the symbolic politics theory has not been widely used as a theory that can explain the ethnic peace. Even for the Malaysian case study, the symbolic politics theory only is used to test one conflict that arose in Malaysia around 1960s between the Chinese and Malays ethnic group.

Cases like the Acehnese ethnic wars, which have been going on for more than fifty years from the Daud Bereueh movement until the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), are relatively new and needs more testing. The complexity of the Acehnese ethnic wars are also a very interesting case in Southeast Asia because the Acehnese ethnic wars have a very long historical journey even if we compare the wars to the ethnic conflict in Malaysia and the Philippines and the conflicts remaining unresolved. Aceh has become a gate to Southeast Asia since in the colonials' era and thus, Aceh plays a very important role in Southeast Asia. Here, the symbolic politics theory should be tested in the case of the Aceh wars because it can give a more explanatory power to the theory.



- c. Applicability of the symbolic politics theory in the Acehnese ethnic conflicts or wars

The symbolic politics theory is vastly applicable for the Acehnese ethnic conflicts or wars because this theory can explain the interests, motivations, and choices of the actors, the devices that the actors use to provoke conflicts, and the reasons to have conflicts. For example, On the Aceh case, the elite actors like Daud Bereueh or Hasan di Tiro, had different interests, motivations, and choices in defending their ethnic group. Daud Bereueh's movement used religious motivations of Islam to defend their identity as the Acehnese separate from the North Sumatran people who have a different religion, Christianity, and to form the Indonesian Islamic state. Daud Bereueh's movement used the myth of Islam to encourage, provoke, and even manipulate the Acehnese to join with the *Darul Islam* movement to create their own Islamic nation. Thus, the physical conflicts between the Daud Bereueh movements through the *Darul Islam* rebellion were unavoidable.

On the other hand, Hasan di Tiro through GAM (Free Aceh Movement) has different interests, motivations, and choices in defending the Acehnese ethnic group as a political entity. He used nationalism rather than Islamism as a motivation to fight against the Javanese Indonesian central government. He used nationalism of the Acehnese ethnic group to differentiate from the majority of the Indonesian people who are more than 80% Muslim. Nationalism implies that the Acehnese differentiate their identity as the Acehnese ethnic group with the Javanese ethnic group who dominate the Indonesian people. In this logic, Hasan di Tiro exaggerates the differences to provoke the emotions of the Acehnese and at the same time, to trigger the Javanese Indonesian central

government's emotions. In response, the Javanese used their power philosophy to dominate the Acehnese. Therefore, both Acehnese elites, Daud Bereueh and Hasan di Tiro, substantially used the myth-symbols such as the flag, religion, ethnicity or nationalism as their devices to create emotional supporters and the ethnic masses to create a hostile attitude and situation to stimulate group members to fight against the rival group like the Javanese Indonesian central government.

#### F. Conclusion

This study derives partly from my disagreement with dominant theory about the ethnic conflict or war, which are the pure rational choice theory and the psychological approach. First, the mainstream theory is the rational choice theory that has been widely used and accepted by scholars. This theory derives from the instrumentalist approach. This approach mainly used the cost and benefits calculation on ethnic conflicts. It is the elites who use the instrument of ethnic group to gain their own interests. The rationalist theorists consider that people take any political choice is based on the rational calculation. Thus, every people will consider the costs and benefits of conflict or war. In this sense, war will only happen if the people choose to war because they already consider the benefits is bigger than the cost if they go for war. Clearly, the pure rationalist theorists can be located in the instrumentalist approach in interpreting the ethnic conflict or war. However, the cost-benefits calculation fails to count the non-rational factors, for example, the role of the emotions, and ideological consideration in ethnic conflict or war.

Second, there is also the psychological approach that emphasis the significant role of the emotions that trigger ethnic conflict or war. For example, fears, hates, and

resentment are the concrete construction of hostile emotions. In addition, the competition of domination over the rival group to show their superiority motivates hostile attitudes toward their rival group. In this sense, any political choice from the fanatic supporters and their elites is based on emotional considerations than the rational considerations. Thus, conflicts arise because of the emotions from one group over the other group in purpose of the political domination. Psychological approaches deal with power over other ethnic groups, prejudice, and negative feelings about the other group. At the heart of this argument is the notion that emotions are created through myths and symbols. The myth and symbols is a device to define and control ethnic identity, existence, status, and their security. Therefore, the fanatic supporters of certain ethnic group are willing to fight and even die for their ethnic group's myths and symbols. However, the psychological approach could not explain why the myth and symbols motivates ethnic war. In fact, this approach neglects the importance of leaders or politicians. In this case, it is the elites who could activate the myth and symbols, by provoking the followers to defend their ethnic group's myth and symbols, for their own goals and thus conflict would arise. Another problem is the role of emotions on ethnic group conflict. Emotions is also could not directly become the trigger of conflict. Emotions need devices for example, myths and symbols, and leaders to mobilize hostile emotions to lead to conflict or war.

My study provides an alternative interpretation of the Acehese ethnic conflict. Focusing on the three significant case studies of the Acehese rebellion, I emphasize the study of symbolic politics theory as tool of analysis in explaining the motivation, the process and the result of the Acehese ethnic conflicts since 1945 to the recent situations. I argue that the Acehese and the Javanese Indonesian leaders or elites should see the

Acehnese rebellions as a politics of myths symbols. The outbreak ethnic conflict in 1953 and in the Soeharto New Order period, and the subsequent peace in the 1998 reform period should be understood in terms of the politics of myths and symbols, particularly the conflict between the leaders that provoke the ideological myths and symbols in order to shows their political dominations over the rival group. Therefore, the symbolic politics theory is combining the rationalist theory and the psychological approach in explaining the Acehnese ethnic conflicts in a more comprehensive manner.

After this literature review I will utilize the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese rebellions. Initially, Chapter 3 will discuss the setting of Indonesian and the context of the political situation and finally the nature of the Acehnese conflicts. The objective of chapter 3 is to give deeper understanding of the political setting of the Acehnese rebellions in Indonesia. Chapter 4,5, and 6 will apply the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese rebellions on three different regimes and periods in Indonesia, which are under Soekarno regime, Soeharto regime, and the reform regimes after 1998.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **INDONESIA AND THE ACEHNESE REBELLIONS**

#### **A. Introduction**

This chapter will explain the significance contexts of the geography and ethnicity, the politics of Indonesia, and how the Indonesian politics relate to the Acehese rebellions. In this chapter, my discussion will begin by acknowledging the geography and ethnicity of Indonesia and will continue with exploring the politics and ideology in Indonesia since 1945. Furthermore, this chapter will analyze the ideological debate between the Islamic ideology proponent and the secular nationalist proponent that influence the stance of the Acehese in dealing with the Indonesian central government. I will carry on my discussion on the nature of the Acehese movement from their first rebellion in 1953 to their most recent rebellion in 1998 and the period after the changes of the Indonesian regime from an authoritarian to a more democratic regime. The objective of this chapter is explaining the significant setting of the Aceh conflicts in Indonesian context.

#### **B. Geography and ethnicity in Indonesia**

Before further discussion of the Indonesian politics, it is necessary to identify the geography and ethnicity of Indonesia in order to recognize the complexity of the Indonesian government in coping with the archipelago territory, which is more prone to the separatism movements. As Monica Toft illustrates, the existence of regional concentration of a particular group is very nearly a necessary condition for ethnic





Indonesian population.<sup>70</sup> At the same time, there are more than 300 ethnic groups with unique ethnic languages in Indonesia. Each ethnic group in Indonesia has their own territory base that very possibly leads to chauvinistic sentiments. Consequently, as Monica Duffy Toft shows, the existence of regional concentration of a certain groups is a required condition for ethnic insurgence, but when certain group stretch in different area, they almost never rebel.<sup>71</sup> This pattern is detected in many places in Indonesia. The rebellions of Papuan, Moluccas, East Timorese, Sundanese in West Java, and the Acehese are examples of the consequence of the ethnic group concentration based upon territory. This phenomenon is known as regionalism revolt. Hence, these ethnic group rebellions fulfilled one of the necessary conditions of insurgency to revolt to the Indonesian central government.

Therefore, based on the geography and ethnicity in Indonesia, it is very difficult for the Indonesian central government to rule a 3,000 mile long archipelago, which consist of 17,508 islands, and more than 300 ethnic groups with their own ethnic languages. As a result, it is easy for separatist movements to gain ground in Indonesia.

### C. The politics and ideology in Indonesia

On March 1, 1945 the Investigating Committee for the preparation of Indonesian independence was established under the support of Japanese occupation authorities to prepare for the Indonesian independence. This committee consisted of all representations

<sup>70</sup> ibid. "The CIA World Factbook-Indonesia," 2008, citing data from 2000 census. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/id.html> (accessed July 05, 2008).!

<sup>71</sup> Monica Duffy Toft, *Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 2003).!











*abangan* is on the other side of *santri* and thus, *abangan* ideologically, is more close to nationalist. The political preferences of *santri* people tend to adopt Islam as their ideology and their political preferences include choosing the members of the house of representative and they prefer Islam as their philosophical basis for Indonesian state. In contrast, the *abangan* people prefer secular nationalist when voting for their representative and prefer *Pancasila*, as the Indonesian state philosophical basis.

In fact, many Indonesian, since the 1955 general election, tended to support secular nationalists (*abangan*) rather than *santri* even though most of Indonesian identifies them as Muslim. This pattern of support was shown in every general election in Indonesia. The two most recent general elections (1999 and 2004) in Indonesia also indicate that the secular nationalist (*abangan*) is still stronger rather than the *santri*.

### 3.1 Major Parties in Indonesian and Recent Parliamentary Elections Result (Percent of Vote)

Name	Notes	1999	2004
Golkar (functional Group Party)	Secular party, former ruling party of Suharto [nationalist, <i>abangan</i> ]	22.4	21.6
PDI-P (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle)	Secular party, the third-largest party under Suharto's rule [and this party originated was the re-birth of PNI of Soekarno, the first Indonesian President's party]. [nationalist, <i>abangan</i> ]	33.7	18.5
PKB (National Awakening Party)	Inclusive party, supported by Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest Muslim organization.	12.6	10.6
PPP (United Development Party)	Islamist party, the second-largest party under Suharto's rule.	10.7	8.5
PD (Democrat Party)	Secular party, newly formed before 2004 elections as political vehicle for Yudoyono. [nationalist, <i>abangan</i> ]	-	7.5



led by Daud Bereueh, the Acehese *ulama* (Islamic scholar) leader, who considered Indonesian national government inconsistent with the principles of Islam as a state philosophical basis<sup>81</sup>. Starting from 1976, Hasan di Tiro, the descendant of Tengku cik di Tiro, as an Islamic hero in Indonesia and the leader of Free Aceh Movement (GAM), fought for the Acehese Islamic nation-state independence not only because of greater autonomy on religious issues and the economic exploitation by Jakarta, but also under the banner of nationalism.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, the political ideology debate occurred on a national level had influenced the position of the Acehese in taking action to defend their identity and its political entity as part of the Islamic community in creating the Indonesian Islamic State.

### E. The Origins of the Acehese rebellions

The history of the Acehese rebellion has lasted for decades, even though not continuously in the form of clearly armed conflicts. Despite the fact that all events are interconnected, every period of rebellion has its own cause, actors, local as well as national influences, and reactions of the Indonesian central government to the Acehese rebellion. The rebellions of the Acehese are symbolized by the events that motivate the Acehese to revolt against the Indonesian national government. The three symbolic events are the Daud Bereueh movement in 1953, the formation of Free Aceh Movement

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p. 50. !

<sup>82</sup> Edward Aspinall, "From Islamism to Nationalism in Aceh, Indonesia," in *Nation and Nationalism* 13, no. 2 (2007): 245-246. !







Those who struggled in this epic would be rewarded with the delights of paradise.<sup>88</sup> This epic also includes discussion of prosecuting holy war against infidels. Hence, the Acehese have a strong identity as devoted Muslims. The consequences of adopting the myth of HPS resulted in a revolt to have an Islamic Indonesian state in 1953 under Daud Bereueh leadership through the *Darul Islam* rebellions.<sup>89</sup> Bereueh was a very central leader because the Acehese recognized him as an Islamic leader, a noble heir, and as an official Aceh local government leader.

b. Free Aceh Movement under Soeharto's regime of the New Order era (1969-1998)

The second symbolic event is the insurgency led by Hasan di Tiro. The insurgency started in 1976 with the formation of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). Hasan di Tiro established GAM as the Aceh-Sumatra National Liberation Front (ASNLF) in October 1976. He is a descendant of well-known *ulama* (Islamic scholar) family of Muslim clergy and more importantly, he is a grandson of Teungku Cik di Tiro, the hero of the anti-colonial fight against the Dutch.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Edward Aspinall, "From Islamism to Nationalism in Aceh, Indonesia," in *Nation and Nationalism* 13 no. 2 (2007): 245-246. !

<sup>89</sup> Nazzaruddin Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehese Rebellion*, (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985). See also C. Van Dijk, *Rebellion Under the Banner of Islam: The Darul Islam in Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981). !

<sup>90</sup> Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, (Washington, DC: East-West Center Washington, 2004), 4. See also Lukman Thalib, *A Historical Study of the National Movement for the Independence of Aceh-Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: University of Malaya Press, 2002), 259. !

The GAM's ideology is national liberation. Hence, the GAM's purpose is to make the Acehnese free from all political suppression, including the Indonesian government.<sup>93</sup> GAM portrayed the Javanese Indonesian government as the continuation of the Dutch colonial rule. They have similarities in terms of their behavior of invasion and occupation of the Acehnese people. In contrast, the Indonesian government described the GAM as a betrayer of the Republic of Indonesia. Moreover, the GAM's objective is to ensure "the survival of the people of Aceh-Sumatra as a nation; the survival of their political, social,

<sup>93</sup> Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, Policy Studies 2 (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 6. !

cultural, and religious heritage which are being destroyed by the Javanese colonialist” and to reopen “the question of decolonization of the Dutch East Indies or ‘Indonesia.’”<sup>94</sup> Here, Schulze categorized the Acehnese as ethnically nationalistic and follower of Islam.<sup>95</sup>

Schulze pointed out that the Acehese nationalist movement constructed by GAM is ethnic rather than public. They construct themselves through the primordial perspective that ties the Acehese through blood, religion and ethnic group affiliations. Therefore, an Acehese is defined as “a person whose family has resided in Aceh over several generations, is Muslim, and is a member of one of Aceh’s nine *suku* [ethnic group]: Aceh, Alas, Gayo, Singkil, Tamiang, Kluet, Anek Jamee, Bulolehee, and Simeuleu.”<sup>96</sup>

The GAM was a small, very organized, and ideological organization that consisted of 70 people as their core organizers, which led by a highly educated elite class.<sup>97</sup> The GAM declared the Acehnese an independent nation for the second time in December 4, 1976 after Daud Bereueh declared its independence for the first time. The second declaration of Aceh independence aimed at showing the political and ideological features of the Acehnese fights. This second declaration was a symbol that created a hostile situation in Aceh and was an instrument to mobilize the Acehnese to follow Hasan

<sup>94</sup> See the ASNLF website ([www.asnlf.net](http://www.asnlf.net)) retrieved at July 8, 2008.!

<sup>95</sup> Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, Policy Studies 2 (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 7-8.!

<sup>96</sup> Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, Policy Studies 2 (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 7.!

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. 4.!











The reformation era of 1998 brought important opportunities for GAM to develop and re-establish itself because of the financial crisis in the Indonesia state and because of the momentum of the East Timor referendum to separate from the Indonesia state in 1999, the proximity of the 1989 DOM, and the decline of credibility of the Indonesian central government. The people of Aceh found the courage to come forward and bring the years of terror and brutality to the attention of the communities. The fast growing for desire a referendum to choose whether or not the Acehnese wanted to stay a part of Indonesia or if they wanted to separate as their own nation-state was the common will of the Acehnese and a the measure of their political activism after years of suppression under DOM.

Inspired by the Timorese referendum in choosing whether they wanted to stay a part of Indonesia or if they wanted to be an independent nation-state of East Timor, which resulted in Indonesia being forced to give up its claim on the territory, made the people of Aceh look for a similar option. In September 1999, East Timor's referendum was held and in the following month, there were massive rallies across Aceh that encouraged a similar referendum. The referendum of East Timor was a "blueprint" for the Acehnese and also a key propaganda strategy employed by the media and other information communication technologies. The Acehnese assumed that the international community would have the same sympathy for them as they did for the East Timor people. Baharuddin Yusuf Habibie, the Indonesian transition President or the third President, who replaced the President Soeharto, visited Aceh in March 1999 and promised that the army's abuses would be investigated and the perpetrators prosecuted. These promises went unfulfilled and only encouraged secessionist sentiment and







One of the consequences of these ideological conflicts was the attitude of the Acehnese in response to secular nationalists' Indonesian government. The Acehnese who identified themselves as strong believers of Islam were concerned about the secular Indonesian state basis that would threaten the Acehnese through the designated policy of the Indonesian central government that included Aceh a part of the North Sumatra Province whose population consist of North Sumatrans who were non-believers of Islam. Hence, to defend their identity as strong believers of Islam, the Acehnese revolted against the Indonesian central government under the *Darul Islam* (Abode of Islam) banner in 1953. Therefore, the adoption of Islam as the dominant religion and the basis for the political movement was clearly the main reason the Acehnese revolted against the secular Indonesian central government.

However, the revolts for the Acehnese change over time from Islam as the main basis of the Acehnese rebellion to nationalism combined with Islam as the guiding force. The Acehnese, through the leadership of Hasan di Tiro, differentiated their identity as Acehnese from the Javanese Indonesian government. In 1976, di Tiro took the opportunity to change the Acehnese identity from strong believers of Islam to Aceh nationalists. Di Tiro promoted the idea that Aceh should be viewed as a separate nation by promoting ethnic pride designated Aceh as the formal language of the Acehnese nation. The Javanese Indonesian central government was seen as the oppressors of the Aceh nation. Obviously, di Tiro's political agenda was to combine a new identity of Aceh nationalism and Islam as traditions of the Acehnese values. With this ideological combination of Islam and nationalism, he attracted the Acehnese attention to support his

political agenda to create a new Aceh nation by re-declaring Acehese independence in 1976.

Hasan di Tiro succeeded in attracting masses of the Acehese peoples' support to create their own nation to gain their freedom from the Javanese Indonesian government. The Acehese supported the GAM under Hasan di Tiro leadership because the Indonesian government exploited the Acehese resources by taking most of their economical resources to Java and left nothing to the Acehese. Moreover, the Javanese Indonesian government continued to use *Pancasila* as the state basis of Indonesia, while the Acehese still wanted to uphold Islam formally as their legal basis in Aceh territory. Hence, conflicts were unavoidable between the Acehese and the Indonesian central government though its armed forces.

After we discuss the contexts of geography and ethnicity, the political dynamic in Indonesia and the nature of the Aceh rebellions. On chapter 4 I will analyze the symbolic politics approach on the first case study of the Acehese rebellion under the first Indonesian president, Soekarno regime. The aim of chapter 4 is to give details explanation of the applicability of the symbolic politics approach on the first erupt of Aceh conflict under the Javanese secular nationalist Soekarno regime.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **THE ACEHNESE CONFLICTS UNDER SOEKARNO'S PERIOD**

#### **A. Introduction**

After we discuss the context of Indonesian politics, the debate of ideology, and the relationship of Indonesian politics to the nature of the Acehese rebellions; I will now discuss the applicability of the symbolic politics approach on the first outbreak of the Acehese conflict under Soekarno regime. This study attempts to explain the first outbreak of the Acehese conflict within the Indonesian state against the Indonesian central government under Soekarno leadership. Focusing on the myth hostility, fears, opportunity, mass hostility, and hostile mobilization my main goal is to highlight the symbolic politics theory on the 1953 Acehese rebellion under the *Darul Islam* movement. I argue that the outbreak of the Acehese conflict must be viewed as a result of the politics of the myths and symbols from both elites. The elites from both sides utilize the myths and symbols that exist on their own group to provoke the hostile situations and thus, mass hostility arise especially on the Acehese side.

The Acehese under Daud Bereueh leadership feel threaten by the fact that Soekarno forces the Acehese to adopt secular *Pancasila* ideology rather than the Islamic ideology in Indonesia. Moreover, Soekarno insist to include Aceh territory to the North Sumatra Province. These Indonesian government policies are considered a threat to the existence of the Acehese identity. In response the Daud Bereueh declared the

Acehnese independent as a way to show their nation's strength over the Javanese Indonesian side. Kartosuwirjo as the *Darul Islam* movement leader supported this revolt. Thus, conflict between the Javanese Indonesian government and Daud Bereueh movement was unavoidable because myths, fears, and opportunity were present. Conflicts are more likely to happen because the Daud Bereueh evoked the myths and symbols of the Acehnese as the true believers of Islam.

### B. Myths justifying hostility









an expression of dissatisfaction to mythologize the secular Indonesian central government as an inconsistent party. This myth further legitimized the Acehnese creation of hostile attitudes toward the Indonesian central government.

In line with the Acehnese expression, the Acehnese mythologize the Indonesian central government, which is dominated by the Javanese. Arguing their intentions are similar to the Dutch intention, which wanted to make Aceh a secular or non-Islamic territory. The Dutch fought against the Acehnese *ulama* or Islamic scholars to Christianize the Acehnese. Meanwhile the Indonesian central government under Soekarno's leadership wanted to make a unitary Indonesian state by making all territories, including Aceh, form under the secular state based on *Pancasila*. Consequently, the Indonesian central government duplicating the Dutch colonial strategies by followed the policies applied by the Dutch in Java.

In fact, in a disappointing meeting with the first Indonesian president of Soekarno in Kutaraja in 1948, the president only promised the Acehnese he would try to make Aceh an Islamic region. Soekarno emphasized his reluctance of an Islamic Indonesian state and only stated that Indonesia would be based on Islamic principles, which believes in God, to include the *Pancasila*.<sup>120</sup> This behavior of the Soekarno was influenced by the myth of power in the Javanese political culture. *Pancasila* is based on the concept of the power of Javanese culture, which stipulates that power would increase if the leader could unite the heterogeneous groups of Indonesia under his leadership. Hence, it implies that the *Pancasila* as state principles is clearly referred to the concept of power of the

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. 30.!















through assimilation program under the secular “imagined community” state of Indonesia.

Specifically, the Acehnese felt threaten by the decision of the Indonesian central government policy to included Aceh in the North Sumatra Province. The Acehnese feared the loss of their identity as Acehnese, which is a devoted Muslim region. The Acehnese see Islam, as their religion, as the symbol that drove them to fight against the Dutch before Indonesian independence and in the revolutionary period of Indonesian in 1945 to 1949. The Acehnese thought that their ethnic group’s existence is at risk. These fears were inflated by emotion and feelings of the in and out-group. The Acehnese felt that they were not part of the North Sumatra Province because they have distinct characteristics, historical heritages, and cultural differences. Hence, the Acehnese were reluctant to be included in the North of Sumatra Province because they fear being dominated by the non-Aceh, Christian, and secular people in North Sumatra and Java area. This condition can confirm an unfriendly manner to the other groups.

Historically, the Acehnese had long experience of being dominated by the Dutch as a colony in Aceh. The Acehnese had been dominated and been the victims of the Dutch domination, and thus this condition triggered fears of the Acehnese ethnic groups extinction under the Indonesian central government. Furthermore, the myth of domination plays an important role in creating the fears of the dominated group. Once fears exist in a group, it justifies any violence in the name of self-defense. Such fears and threats facilitate the Acehnese ethnic group mobilization to defend themselves. For example, the Dutch oppressed the Acehnese especially the *ulama*, the informal





The Javanese Indonesian government feels insecure because the Acehnese have disrupted the creation of the Indonesian state. The Acehnese actions stimulate a hostile manner for the Javanese. These psychological developments rationalize fear to provoke ethnic mobilization, conflict, or even to act in the deadliest violence, genocide. The myth of national unity of Indonesia plays important roles in exposing that the Acehnese embarrass the Javanese ethnic group. The Acehnese felt that they had been very loyal to the Javanese Indonesian central government and that is the reason the Acehnese demanded their own province and asked Islamic law be used as the Indonesian state philosophical foundation. In fact, this Javanese fear justifies any violence in order to keep the national unity, as self-defense, under the secular Indonesian state. Such fear and threats stimulate the ethnic group mobilization to defend on their belief for self-defense.

#### D. Opportunity to mobilization

The ethnic conflict or war will take place if freedom for the ethnic group to mobilize is present with no state's repression. Aceh, under the Soekarno period, had significant opportunity to mobilize the Acehnese ethnic group because the Acehnese, especially the *ulama*, dominated the local rulers and local government structures. It had shown the Indonesian situation after gaining its independence from the Japanese in 1945. The period after Indonesian independence was the period of reclaiming the independence from the Dutch and maintaining the stability of domestic politics of Indonesian as a state and nation. This situation was illustrating the ignorance of the Indonesian central government toward the regions and thus it creates the feeling of regional sentiment as an opportunity to revolt toward the ignorant central government.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. 63-64.!

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Acehnese was concentrated in the tip of the northern of Sumatra. Hence, the Acehnese fulfilled one of the necessary conditions of insurgency to revolt against the Indonesian central government.

In mid-1951, the Acehese disappointment toward the Indonesian central government heard by Kartosuwirjo, the highest leader of *Negara Islam Indonesia* (NII, Indonesian Islamic Nation). In early 1952, Kartosuwirjo instantly sent his representative, Abdul Fatah, alias Mustafa, to approach Daud Bereueh. Abdul Fatah gave a copy of Kartosuwirjo's *dakwah* (religious explanation) on the *Darul Islam* movement and requested Daud Bereueh and his loyal followers of the Acehese to merge with the *Darul Islam* movement. The Kartosuwirjo's *dakwah* mostly contained Islamic ideological justification of the *Darul Islam* movement in Indonesia to convince Daud Bereueh of the religious movement in the name of Islam. In early 1953 the *Darul Islam* encouraged the Daud Bereueh to prepare the military supports. Daud Bereueh gained the military support from *Persatuan Bekas Pejuang Aceh* (Association of the Veterans of Aceh) and the *Pandu Islam* (Islamic Boy Scout) as the youth military forces.<sup>143</sup> The joining of the *Darul Islam* and the support from the local military have created the opportunity for the Daud Bereueh to mobilize the Acehese to revolt against the Indonesian central government.

### E. Mass hostility

*The Acehnese hostility toward the Javanese Indonesian.* While myths justifying hostility sometimes remain hidden in a society, those in Indonesia did not. The negative

<sup>143</sup> Nazzaruddin Sjamsuddin, *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehese Rebellion* (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 88-95. !









North Sumatra Province. Nevertheless, the Indonesian central government declared plans to include Aceh into North Sumatra Province in August 1950.<sup>151</sup> The Indonesian central government triggered many conflicting events that lead to the first Acehnese conflict against the Indonesian central government.

Furthermore, the Aceh provincial representative assembly supported the Indonesian central government. The Aceh representative controversially supported and showed their loyalty to the Indonesian central government, which on the contrary to the *Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh* (well known as PUSA, or Aceh Islamic Scholars Association) shown their disagreement. The PUSA members felt threatened by this situation. Hence, the PUSA threaten to retreat their members from the provincial government. Seeing this condition, the Indonesian central government with Prime Minister Muhammad Natsir, persuaded the leader of PUSA, Daud Bereueh, to gather in an integral nation-state of Indonesia based on the unity of diversity basis. However, Natsir's persuasion to Daud Bereueh failed and met a dead end.

Consequently, the Indonesian central government took actions through the changing of the administrative personnel in Aceh region. It was a Javanese who became the chief of administration in Aceh. More importantly, the Indonesian central government transferred the local military units to the other islands such as the Sulawesi Island and replaced them with troops from outside the Acehnese. Another change made by the Indonesian central government was the usage of the Acehnese that against the existence

<sup>151</sup> Lukman Thalib, *A Historical Study of the National Movement for the Independence of Aceh-Sumatra, 175-185*.!



Islamic state or the secular parties. The national tensions between the Islamic state supporters and the secular nationalist supporters were relevant to the tensions in Aceh region. A central symbolic event that connects the national and Aceh situation was the All-Indonesian *ulama* conference in Medan-North Sumatra in April 1953. At this conference, hostile attitudes came out explicitly from the *ulama* in Indonesia by sending the messages to the people around Indonesia of final decision to make an Indonesia Islamic state. More significantly, the national *ulama* conference was held under the chairmanship of the representative of the Aceh *ulama* or PUSA leader, Daud Bereueh. After the conference, Daud Bereueh directly took a trip all over Aceh to propagate the *ulama* conference decision.<sup>155</sup>

Under Daud Bereueh's leadership, the PUSA members who agreed on devoted Islamic values and the formation of the Indonesian Islamic state created para-military units. The two units of the para-military recruitment were the para-military Boy Scout Organization (*Pandu Organisasi*) and Ex-revolutionary Troops of Aceh Veterans (*Bekas Pejuang Aceh*). Daud Bereueh organized these two para-military organizations in preparation of the making of an Indonesian Islamic state. The Daud Bereueh movement invoked the Acehnese communal mythology. At that time, Daud Bereueh invoked an Islamic mythology rather than an ethnic or nationalist mythology. For the Acehnese, Islam being a communal religion and ideology, and at the same time it was also the Acehnese way of life that have a certain territory for the exercise of its belief and teachings and for the religious rule of *Shari'a* (Islamic laws) and adapt laws.

<sup>155</sup> Lukman Thalib, *A Historical Study of the National Movement for the Independence of Aceh-Sumatra*, 195.!











(*Bekas Pejuang Aceh*) to attack the Javanese government in the name of Islamic myth of the Islamic state.

The declaration of the Islamic State of Indonesia followed by the well-planned attacks by the Boy Scout Organization and Ex-revolutionary Troops of Aceh Veterans to several Indonesian military and police unit posts in most of the district (*Kabupaten*) in Aceh. In September 21, 1953, Daud Bereueh cleverly took the opportunity to mobilize the Acehnese ethnic group to arise the rebellion under the banner of *Darul Islam* movement. The Soekarno's government and their military introduced to restore order quickly by counter-insurgency operations. What drove this security dilemma that led to conflict were the actions of armed groups and the also the provocations of the elites using the Muslim myths, fears of domination over the rival group and chauvinist mobilization had make conflict likely to happen in Aceh.

In chapter 4, I already addressed the puzzle of how myths and symbols, fears, opportunity, mass hostility, and hostile mobilization lead to conflicts between the Acehnese under Daud Bereueh and the Javanese secular Soekarno regime. After chapter 4 as the first case study, I will utilize the symbolic politics approach on chapter 5 of the second phase of the Acehnese rebellion under Soeharto regime, the second Indonesian president and well known as the New Order regime. The goal of chapter 5 is to presents deeper explanation on the reasons of the Aceh ethnic conflict under the Javanese Soeharto regime from 1969 to 1998 period based on the symbolic politics approach. On chapter 5, I will discuss specifically on the hostile myths and symbols, fears of extinction, opportunity to mobilization, mass hostility, and chauvinist mobilization. These

indicators intend to show the applicability of the symbolic politics theory on Aceh ethnic conflict under the Soeharto regime.

### A. Introduction

Ethnic conflict between the Acehnese and the Javanese Indonesian government under Soeharto regime occurred because of a fundamental clash between the Acehnese myth-symbol complex focused on fears of ethnic (nation) domination and the Javanese one emphasizing the sovereignty and the national integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. Each party defined dominance in Aceh as an important to its national existence and saw the other party aspirations as a threat of group extinction. Aceh itself thus became, for both parties, a symbol of national aspirations and of the hostility of the other party. The

106

result was a security dilemma and violence, then a politics of nationalist extremism that led to conflict or war.

This chapter examines the symbolic politics theory on the Acehnese ethnic conflicts under the Soeharto's New Order period from 1969 to 1998. Specifically, my discussion will begin by exploring the three necessary conditions of the Acehnese ethnic conflict, which are the myths hostility from both conflicted ethnic group, fears of extinction from both sides, and the existence opportunity to mobilization the could lead to the hostile situations, followed by mass hostility, which created by both elites between Soeharto and Hasan di Tiro. Eventually, their politics of myths and symbols create hostile emotions among their supporters and thus, conflict arise as a result.

#### B. Myth justifying hostility

*The Acehnese myths.* The myth in the first rebellion of the Acehnese was the identity myth of Islam rather than as a nation of the Acehnese ethnic group. The Acehnese during the Daud Bereueh era identified themselves as strong believers of Islam because, historically, they felt that they had a very strong connection to the Ottoman Empire and Mecca as the heartland of Islam and thus, the Acehnese strongly defend their identity, as devoted Muslim, by declaring their effort in creating an Indonesian Islamic state used the Jakarta Charter. Consequently, the Acehnese through Daud Bereueh leadership was revolt under the *Darul Islam* movement to create Indonesian Islamic state by using the Islamic identity myth. Therefore, conflict was unavoidable between the Acehnese and the secular Indonesian central government in 1953.





symbols by taking the aspirations from the myths of the Acehese glory in the past and the heroism of the people in fighting the Dutch colonial. It was the myth-symbol of the GAM's flag. Hasan di Tiro present the two myth-symbols in the GAM's flag to the Acehese was related to the Acehese Kingdom as an independent nation and to the Muslim identity of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the combination of the two myth-symbols manifested on the flag of GAM as follow:

Figure 5.1 The flag of GAM



Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free\\_Aceh\\_Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_Aceh_Movement)

The first aspiration of the GAM's flag is related to the heroism and the myth-symbol of the Acehnese Kingdoms before the Dutch colonial came in to the Aceh nation in 1873. The flag of the Aceh government Kingdom, named "Alam Zulfiqar" those made by Sultan Ali Mughayat Shah (the first Aceh Sultan) in the 1511-1530 period<sup>164</sup>, as follow:

<sup>164</sup> This image of the Aceh government kingdom can be found in, <http://www.chinahistoryforum.com/index.php?s=735fd03b1aa58da4b5a9f774e13d8ee4&showtopic=9865&hl=&highlight=aceh>

Figure 5.2 The flag of the Aceh government Kingdom (1511-1530)



Source: <http://img156.imageshack.us/my.php?image=acehflagalamzulfiqar02mi7.jpg>

This flag was the symbols of the Aceh government of Sultan Ali Mughayat Shah that memorizing the glory of the Aceh Kingdom as a nation over the Malays peninsula. Di Tiro mythologizes the past glory of the Acehnese Kingdom through the *Alam Zulfiqar* flag. This flag symbolized Aceh as a political entity of a nation. Hasan di Tiro re-emerge the myth-symbols of this Aceh nation's flag aimed to rise of ethnic sentiments with claims that the Sultanate of Aceh had previously extended beyond the present administrative territory. Di Tiro uses this device to differentiate the Acehnese as a separate nation from the Javanese Indonesian nation. Furthermore, di Tiro uses this flag myth as a symbol to fight against the dominance Javanese Indonesian oppressor.

The second aspiration of Hasan di Tiro to use the recent GAM's flag was related to the Ottoman Empire. The relation to the Ottoman Empire symbolized close

connections between the Acehnese and the Ottoman Empire as the Centre of the Muslim in the world. It implies that the Acehnese identified themselves as strong believers of Islam alike in the Ottoman Empire period. It is shown on the similarities between the GAM's flag and the Ottoman Empire's flag, which had the star and the crescent moon as the symbols of Islam, as shown below:

Figure 5.3 The flag of Ottoman Empire



Source:<http://www.chinahistoryforum.com/index.php?s=735fd03b1aa58da4b5a9f774e13d8ee4&showtopic=9865>

These two myths-symbols' aspirations had formed the GAM's flag myth-symbol to create a new identity of Acehnese as a nation that devoted to Islam. The creation of the new myth creates hostility among the Acehnese in a way that the Elite or politician like Hasan di Tiro manipulate the past pride and heroism of the Aceh Kingdom to be used as his device to introduced Aceh as a separate nation with Indonesia based on its historical background of the Aceh Kingdom which had strong relations with the Ottoman Empire. It implies that di Tiro create a myth of an Acehnese nation's flag to justified a hostile condition and attitudes to the Javanese Indonesian as a different nation before the Javanese Indonesian dominate Aceh. In other words, the Acehnese created a challenge

through a creation of Acehnese nation with its GAM's flag myth to the secular Javanese Indonesian nation under Soeharto leadership.

*The Javanese Indonesian myths.* At this period, Soeharto manipulated the Javanese people through his political agenda of the national integrity as one nation. He used the agenda of the national integrity myth as a way to eliminate all other ideologies that could disrupt his plan to centralize his power into his hand only as the president. Here, he wanted to create a nation pride through his national integrity policy as a symbol of a strong nation. Therefore, all other identities that already exist such as religion, ethnicity, or any other identities should only follow his agenda. He uses the *Pancasila* as his device to create a national integrity because the *Pancasila* was a symbol of unity of a pluralistic country.

Initially, the purpose of *Pancasila* was to create a common ground for the creation of an independent, unified, modern Indonesian state regardless of religion, ethnicity or regional origins. However, every regime including their contestants claimed their own interpretation of *Pancasila* and even legitimizes any actions is *Pancasila* based. Hence, Douglas Ramage argues that *Pancasila* is a very flexible Indonesian ideology because of various interpretation of *Pancasila* that legitimize all actions of a regime or the oppositions as an effective justification device to achieve their own goals.<sup>165</sup> Soeharto even frame the *Pancasila* as a way to terminate any other ideologies for example, capitalism, communism, or even religion based ideology. It was proven by his

<sup>165</sup> Douglas Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance*, (London: Routledge, 1995). !

controversial policy in 1984 of *Pancasila* as the only ideological foundation that should be adopted by any organizations in Indonesia. Soeharto's government codified *Pancasila* into national law and thus the government banned any organizations that rejected to adopt *Pancasila* as their rules, constitutions, or characters.<sup>166</sup>

The Soeharto's government aimed to integrate all Indonesian regions uses the device of *Pancasila* as a sole ideological foundation. The Javanese Soeharto's government would eliminate any ideologies that threat the Indonesian national sovereignty of the *Pancasila*. In fact, Soeharto's government demonized the GAM rebels as separatists or GPK (*Gerakan Pengacau Keamanan*/Security Disruptive Movements) that disrupt the Indonesian national integrity. Therefore, the myth of national unity by using *Pancasila* as a sole ideological foundation effectively creates a hostile attitude toward the Acehnese that rebels against the Soeharto's government.

### C. Fears of extinction

*The Acehnese fears.* Typically, the strongest ethnic fears are underlain by the histories of ethnic domination. The Javanese had dominated the Acehnese since Indonesia gained its independent in August 17, 1945. The Acehnese fears were particularly acute because domination and minority status were associated in their minds with ethnic domination. It was proven by the extreme domination by killing the Acehnese who were engaged with the Daud Beureuh movement. Furthermore, the domination associated with ethnic domination because of the Javanese Indonesian government under

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. 3-4. !

Soekarno leadership insists to include Aceh territory to the North Sumatra Province. It symbolizes a Javanese ethnic group domination over the Acehnese because Soekarno, as a Javanese, intended to re-group all ex-East Indies Dutch colonial territory under a nation called Indonesia regardless their religion, ethnicity, or regional origins.

Another domination of the Javanese over the Acehnese was an ideological domination through *Pancasila* ideology over Islamic ideology. The Acehnese who claimed as the strong believers of Islam felt threaten by the Soekarno's decision in using *Pancasila* as the Indonesian state philosophical foundation. The Acehnese felt threaten because Soekarno obligated the Acehnese to adopt *Pancasila* as their sole fundamental state principles. Consequently, the Acehnese fear had no space to practice their culture and religion as their identity. It implies that this policy symbolizes Javanese ethnic group domination over the Acehnese.

The Acehnese feared that the same thing would happen in Aceh like in the Soekarno presidency and in the past of the Dutch colonial period used the symbol of ethnic domination refers to the process. Thus they referred to the Soeharto's government program in 1971 of transmigration by sending more Javanese to the Aceh territory.<sup>167</sup> The new Javanese resident in Aceh got many advantages and privilege through transmigration program such as, they got land to farm and some money to life outside Java Island.

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<sup>167</sup> Riwanto Tirtosudarmo, *Demografi dan Konflik: Kegagalan Indonesia Melaksanakan Proyek Pembangunan Bangsa?* (Demography and Conflict: The Indonesian Failure in Implementing the Nation Development Project) in *Konflik Kekerasan Internal: Tinjauan Sejarah, Ekonomi-Politik, dan Kebijakan di Asia Pasifik (Internal Violent Conflict: History, Political Economy, and Policy Perspective in Asia Pacific)*", eds. Dewi Fortuna Anwar et al. (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2005), 73-74. !

Historically, this transmigration program was similar to the Dutch colonial program in order to fulfill a very cheap Javanese labor to go to outside Java Island, include Aceh territory. It was known as a Javanese domination (Jawanisasi) project.<sup>168</sup> This *Jawanisasi* project had create ethnic group conflict in ways that transmigration program merely aimed to assimilate, if not dominate, all ethnic group in Indonesia to achieve national integration by sending the Javanese to outside Java Island. This history has exacerbated by the fact that the Javanese took control in Aceh local government structure or street level bureaucracy, military, or even as business elites who dominate private and government companies. For example, Tim Kell on his work mentioned that most of the elite, who dominate the economical resources such as liquefied natural gas (LNG) production, were the Javanese.<sup>169</sup> Hence, demographically, the Acehnese received this message as a Javanese ethnic domination over the Acehnese.

*The Javanese Indonesian fears.* The Rebellious and stubborn image of the Acehnese/GAM has developed into a chauvinist Acehnese and fundamentalist of Islam. This image encourages fear as well as hostility toward the Acehnese. Even di Tiro admitted that the Javanese colonial indeed put a strong labeled the GAM as “the terrorist or the separatist”.<sup>170</sup> The stereotype of the Acehnese as rebellious, stubborn, chauvinist, and fundamentalist, is inevitably a source of fear, surely made worse for those whose

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid. 67. !

<sup>169</sup> Tim Kell, *The Roots of Acehnese Rebellion, 1989-1992* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1995), 27. !

<sup>170</sup> Hasan di Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary* (Noshborg, Sweden: National Liberation Aceh Sumatra, 1981), 28. !



parties used myth as “the terrorist, the separatist” or GPK<sup>171</sup> (*Gerakan Pengacau Keamanan/ Security Disruptive Movements*). Anyone socialized by threats such as the GPK is likely to have a visceral reaction in case of conflict with real GAM. The tough image projected by the Soeharto’s government and military as “GPK,” surely contributed to such fears. In Addition, some Javanese settlers on Aceh were victimized by GAM’s members engaged in criminal in response to the loss of their land.<sup>172</sup> Many of the Javanese victims choose to stay behind the Indonesian military, undoubtedly increasing fears among the Javanese who remained.

Furthermore, Hasan di Tiro exacerbated the fear of the Javanese by stated that the choice for the Acehnese is that life in slavery of the Javanese or death with honor as a free man.<sup>173</sup> It implies that di Tiro propagated to the Javanese Soeharto government that GAM would fight against the neo-colonial Javanese in any ways. For example, di Tiro mention on his diary that he would love to lead the Acehnese to fight against the neo-colonial Javanese and thus he returned to Aceh in 1976 to declare the Acehnese independence as a nation.<sup>174</sup> Hence, undoubtedly this propaganda creates fears among the Javanese.

In addition, the GAM also used the *hikayat perang sabil* (the epic of the holy war), which explained how sufferers in the war would be rewarded with the happiness of  
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<sup>171</sup> The term of GPK used by Soeharto’s government to demonized the separatist movement in Aceh of GAM. !

<sup>172</sup> Riwanto Tirtosudarmo, *Internal Violent Conflict: History, Political Economy, and Policy Perspective in Asia Pacific*, 73-75. !

<sup>173</sup> Hasan di Tiro, *The Price of Freedom: The Unfinished Diary*, 12. !

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. 24-25. !





























economical exploitations by the Javanese Indonesian government. The DOM policy was a result of the elites manipulation and provocation to lead the ethnic conflict by using the symbols to create such fear among the ethnic group member. A massive Javanese military under the Indonesian central government command had crush a relatively small numbers of the GAM's core members. Thus, these fears justify offensive actions in the name of self-defense from both sides.

In this context, the conflicts were imbalance because the strength of the GAM's power was not as big as the Javanese Indonesian side. Even though, Hasan di Tiro could provoke the Acehnese myth and symbols, they were lack of resources to fight against the Javanese neo colonial. Hence, the Javanese Indonesian government could easily take the oil and LNG for them selves and shares nothing for the Acehnese. These imbalance conflicts had created such an Acehnese ethnic cleansing. This ethnic cleansing easily seen because after the declaration of Aceh independence in 1976 by Hasan di Tiro, the GAM was not develop under the Javanese Indonesian control by implementing the military operation to terrorize the Acehnese for more than ten years.

After we analyze the second case study on chapter 5 of the ethnic conflict in Aceh, I will develop the symbolic politics theory on the subsequent peace on ethnic peace after the 1998 period in Indonesia. On chapter 6, I will discuss the necessary conditions of the symbolic politics theory on ethnic peace in Aceh. The elites on both sides plays very important role in influencing the peace process through the negotiations between the GAM under Hasan di Tiro leadership and the Indonesian government. The purpose of chapter 6 is to give different perspective on explaining the ethnic peace in Aceh after

the 1998 reform period. The symbolic politics theory on chapter 6 intends to give clearer explanation on the reasons of the ethnic group peace process.





Indonesian transition government under Baharuddin Jusuf Habibie leadership to keep a unity of the Indonesian society. Thus, autonomy as a symbol of changes and freedom became a central debate in reformation period.

This chapter examines the symbolic politics theory on the Acehese ethnic conflict and the subsequent peace after 1998 reform period. This chapter specifically analyzes the myths, fears, opportunities, mass hostility, and the hostile mobilization in determining the existence of the ethnic conflict or peace between the Acehese under Hasan di Tiro leadership and the Javanese Indonesian central government in the reform period.

Ethnic conflict would be occurred because of a fundamental conflict between the Acehese myth-symbols complex focused on fears of ethnic domination and the Javanese Indonesia government under the transition government period emphasizing the sovereignty and Indonesian national integration and saw the regional aspirations as threat for Indonesian existence. Geographically, Aceh is one of Indonesian unity pride symbol and thus, the Indonesian government insists that Aceh should be inside the Indonesian nation-state at any risk. However, the lack of opportunity to mobilize became a factor of ethnic peace under the Helsinki agreement in 2006. Moreover, the mass hostility did not appear on the Javanese Indonesian side. Therefore, the ethnic conflict did not occurred because the lack of elites' manipulation on the politics of the myth and symbol in one side.

### B. Myth justifying hostility

*The Acehese myths.* The myth of the Acehese rebellion under di Tiro leadership on reform period was similar to the Acehese rebellion under Soeharto's regime, as mentioned in chapter 5. Di Tiro even used the symbol of reformation in Indonesia, which is the myth of freedom. On a similar intention of Hasan di Tiro under Soeharto regime, on chapter 5, he led the Acehese movement pursuing their ultimate goal to create independence Acehese nation. Di Tiro re-emerge the past glory of the Aceh Sumatra State before the Dutch colonial annex the Aceh territory. They used a mythology of the Aceh Sumatra State as a way to portrayed the Acehese as an independent nation that separate from the Javanese Indonesian nation. Kirsten E. Schulze explains that Hasan di Tiro with his Acehese movement ultimate goal was to re-gain independent from the neo-colonial Javanese government. She continue to explain that the GAM maintains that Aceh sovereignty should have been returned to the Sultanate of Aceh, which is to Hasan di Tiro as Aceh Sultanate descendent.<sup>206</sup>

The mythology of freedom for the Acehnese also means that they could free from the Javanese Indonesian oppression. The military operation from 1989 create a grievance for the Acehnese because the Acehnese victimized in all form of violence such as intimidation or even be killed because of suspected as rebel. Thus, Hasan di Tiro and GAM gained more popular support from the Acehnese because the Acehnese felt as an in-group of the GAM to fight against the Javanese Indonesian military oppressor.

<sup>206</sup> Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization*, Policy Studies 2 (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 6-7. !





Donald K. Emmerson argue that historically the creation of Indonesia came from the *Sumpah Pemuda* (Youth Oath) as a symbol of the unity in diversity of Indonesia. He mention that the oath contain of three symbols, which are one nation, one people, and one language.<sup>210</sup> The mythology of the 1928 Youth Oath is became a basis of the Indonesian military in reformation period to portray the Acehse as a betrayer of this oath. Thus, General Ryacudu alert any groups that betray the Youth Oath would trigger a hatred and disaster.<sup>211</sup> In other words, the myth of NKRI as an imagined community creates a hostile attitude of the Javanese Indonesian military.

In this sense, the myth of unity in diversity and from Sabang to Merauke became more prone to conflict than ever. The Indonesian government used these myths to eliminate any separatist groups such as the East Timor movement, which eventually East Timor gained their independent from Indonesia. These myths also used by the Indonesian military to justified their actions to eliminate Acehnese separatist movement. For example, the continuation of the military operation of DOM policy in 1998 and afterward to eliminate the GAM was the fact that Indonesian military would do anything to defend Indonesia unity from Sabang to Merauke territory.

### C. Fears of extinction

*The Acehnese fears.* Apparently, the histories of ethnic domination became the strongest Acehnese ethnic fears. Essentially, the Acehnese ethnic fears on reform period  
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<sup>210</sup> Donald K. Emmerson, What is Indonesia? In *Indonesia: The Great Transition*, edited by John Bresnan (Maryland, United States of America: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Inc, 2005), 17.!

<sup>211</sup> See *KOMPAS*, "TNI Minta Maaf pada Rakyat Aceh (TNI apologize to the Acehnese people)," May 14, 2003. Retrieved at October 15, 2008.!







*The Javanese Indonesian fears.* The disloyal image of the Acehese/GAM and their leader of Hasan di Tiro have developed into a chauvinist nationalist Acehese. This negative image motivates such fear and hatred toward the Acehese. All Acehese are suspected as disloyal people by the Indonesian military and thus, the Acehese terrorize by the Indonesian military to prevent the Acehese to support GAM. As a consequence, the Indonesian military is strongly firm to any military operations in Aceh territory. For example, they gather the villagers and the village leader to declare their loyalty to the NKRI (Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia). The Indonesian military also mobilize the villagers to attend the ceremony to declare and oath the villagers' loyalty to NKRI and these activities propagandize through the Indonesian television. The villagers also must show their loyalty to the Indonesian flag as a symbol of loyalty. Moreover, the Acehese required making an Indonesian citizens identification card as a symbol of loyalty to the NKRI and as a symbol of their rejection toward the GAM.<sup>216</sup>

The Acehese under Hasan di Tiro was strongly firm on their stance to gain their independent from Indonesia by using the East Timor blueprint to separate from Indonesia through a referendum. Hasan di Tiro used this blueprint as a public relations propaganda strategy by expecting the international support for East Timor could be transferred to Aceh.<sup>217</sup> Immediately, the Indonesian military react to GAM's stance by declaring war to any separatist activities from NKRI. Thus, the Indonesian military act in overreaction  
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<sup>216</sup> Heru Cahyono, "Dampak Konflik pada Kehidupan Pedesaan di Aceh (Conflict Effect to the Villagers in Aceh)" in *Beranda Perdamaian: Aceh Tiga Tahun Pasca MoU Helsinki (Veranda of Peace: Aceh Three years Post-Helsinki MoU)* edited by Ikrar Nusa Bhakti (Yogyakarta, Indonesia: P2P-LIPI-Pustaka Pelajar, 2008), 333.!

<sup>217</sup> Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization* (Washington, East-West Center Washington, 2004) 41.!

manner because of the provocation of Hasan di Tiro and the GAM separatist activities. It implies the Indonesian central government fear to the situations. Hasan di Tiro's strategy is considered as a serious threat to the unity of Indonesia. These situations create an immediate panic of the Habibie government and thus it creates a hostile situation and attitudes of the Habibie government and the military to react toward the GAM's independent. The Indonesian government offers autonomy as a final answer for Hasan di Tiro. However, di Tiro immediately rejected the proposal because they had trauma of the autonomy experience either under Sokarno or Soeharto's government.

demonstration to support the referendum on Aceh independent. However, this situation responded carefully by the Indonesian government and military. For example, on September 22, 1999, the Indonesian House of Representative (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*, DPR) and People's Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*, MPR) granted a broader authority to the Aceh province of the special autonomy for Aceh. Thus, the Indonesian executive and legislative had been support the special autonomy option for the Acehnese within Indonesia.

#### D. Opportunity to mobilization

According to the symbolic politics theory of ethnic war, there would be no mass hostility if there were little opportunity to mobilize their own ethnic groups. Apparently, the situation after the riot in 1998 in Jakarta had open up the political space for the Acehnese to gain political opportunity of freedom to come up to the surface. On the other hand, the Indonesian government and the military were lack of opportunity to react. They were on the weakest position ever since the student movement in 1998, which resulted in the collapse of the Soeharto regime and the power of military. Thus, the mass ethnic hostility did not escalate.

Four factors, in addition, made the hostile situations more controllable. First, the changes of the Indonesian government from authoritarian to a more democratic government lead to the changes of the Indonesian government behaviors toward the Acehnese by controlling the Indonesian military to act more carefully. Therefore, there was little opportunity for the Indonesian military to act offensively toward the Acehnese.

The people's demand on democratization required the transition government to act wisely and on non-violence manner toward the Acehese movement. The weak position of central government and military has lead to negotiations process between the Indonesian government and the GAM. This negotiation process was support by the media freedom in Indonesia. The democratization in Indonesia resulted on the press freedom. Thus, the Indonesian media could cover the story of the negotiation process freely. The press freedom contributes to the lack of opportunity for the Indonesian government and military to act offensively. Any reactions from the government and military became a concern and create a public opinion in domestic and international level.

The second factor was the internationalization of the Acehese movement negotiations issue weakens the Indonesian government and its military position to react offensively toward the GAM rebellions. The internationalization of this issue was the existence of the Hendry Dunant Center (HDC) as a mediator of the Indonesian government and the GAM movement under Hasan di Tiro control. The mediation of HDC under the Martti Ahtisaari leadership brought to new stage of peace. At the same time, GAM gains more opportunity to mobilize the Acehese by this international negotiation. Hasan di Tiro also was used this dialogue to gain international legitimacy and support. However, the international community on the neutral side and not to support the Acehese break away from the Indonesian state as long the Indonesian could maintain the human right and a more just situation in Aceh. Thus, Hasan di Tiro and the GAM were on a weak side because they did not get the international support as they







domination and by a fear of ethnic extinction, began to launch hostile action against their mythical enemy, the Javanese neocolonial government. In this pursuit they were mobilized by the chauvinist GAM's elites like Hasan di Tiro. Since 1999 to 2004, GAM strategy was aimed creating chaotic situation through guerrilla warfare and a political strategy of internationalization.

The guerrilla's strategy of Hasan di Tiro was to provoke the Indonesian National Military (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*, TNI) to react offensively toward the GAM members. The tactics were mainly of hit-and-run ambushes and continued by the retreat into the mountains or villages among the villagers. One GAM guerrilla fighter stated "We don't have to win the war; we only have to stop them from winning."<sup>227</sup> The guerrilla's tactic was only to provoke the Indonesian National Military (TNI) to react abusive and charged as the human rights abuser. For example, GAM fanatic supporters attacks on vital industries, Javanese migrants, and populated areas in order to provoke and demonize the Indonesian National Military (TNI). Furthermore, the Indonesian National Military (TNI) abusive actions would attract the international community to suppress and put the Indonesian government in the corner. Therefore, the Indonesian government would be in a very weak position in facing the International community and the GAM in negotiations process.

This strategy resulted on the Security Operations (*Operasi Keamanan*) from the Indonesian National Military (TNI) in order to create a friendlier image in front of the

<sup>227</sup> Kirsten E. Schulze, "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency: Strategy and the Aceh Conflict, October 1976-May 2004," in *Verandah of Violence: The Background to the Aceh Problem*, edited by Anthony Reid (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 228.!





149

describe that the Indonesian people should learn to accept the Aceh Governor direct local election won by ex-GAM's members, which is Irwandi Yusuf and Muhammad Nazar. Therefore, both sides commit to create a peace conditions after the Helsinki agreement in 2005 through the peace, just, and transparent Aceh Governor direct local election as the symbols of peace and change for the Acehnese future life.

In sum, when GAM had the opportunity to mobilize, their ambivalent mythology and lack of fear prompted political rather than violent mobilization. When they were given cause to fear-by the Javanese Indonesian government-their opportunity for violent counter-mobilization was quickly stopped by the HDC under the leadership of Martti Ahtisaari. Hasan di Tiro for GAM and the Javanese Indonesian government finally meet an agreement based on the Helsinki agreement in 2005. A neutral Mediation of the HDC resulted in a more promising future of the Acehnese within Indonesia. The GAM and the Acehnese could enjoy more just situations of the economical share of central and regional. Moreover, politically, the Acehnese could change the Indonesian political system by the existence of local party in certain regions and independent regional leader candidates. Culturally, the Acehnese could practice the Islamic *shari'a* law as their identity.

#### F. Conclusion

After I talked about the myth of hostility, fears of extinction, opportunity to mobilization, and chauvinist mobilization and the clashes, the pre-conditions of the symbolic politics theory on ethnic peace does present on the Aceh subsequent peace. The

lack of opportunity from both sides, and the reluctance elites from both sides to continue the war has resulted in negotiations process.

Agreement between the Indonesian government and Hasan di Tiro for GAM on the reform period was predictable. The situation did not include all the pre-conditions for ethnic violence: hostile mythologies and ethnic fears did exist but there were lack of opportunity to mobilize their own ethnic groups. These conditions did not produce a politics of the chauvinist movement and ethnic hostility. GAM's elites actively provoke the Javanese Indonesian elites to react utilizing the myth and their fears to create such opportunity to mobilize the Indonesian nationalist people. However, the Indonesian government did not provoke the myth and the fears of the Javanese politically. There were no responses from the Indonesian elites government in counter-mobilization to the GAM provocations. Therefore, elites from both sides reluctant to evoked the hostile emotions, myths, and symbols to conflicts.

In addition, tsunami disaster had contribute to change the attitudes of GAM and the Indonesian government and agreed to a more win-win solutions by a more just sharing among them. The mediation of Marti Ahtisaari also plays an important role as a symbol of neutral side to solve the conflicts. Thus, ethnic violence was avoided. The third party of Marti Ahtisaari expected to support the Acehese independence by Hasan di Tiro and his GAM, but HDC under Marti Ahtisaari leadership stand on a neutral side. At the same time, they also insist the Indonesian government to not to use military actions in the name of the universal of human rights. Eventually, this situation makes both Acehse and the Indonesian government sides had no other choices but to negotiate for peace.

After we discuss the subsequent ethnic peace in Aceh after the 1998 reform period, finally, I will conclude the research by making the assessment of the theory to shows the applicability of the symbolic politics approach and to explain the strengths and weaknesses of the theory. On the first part of chapter 7, I will assess the symbolic politics theory on the three case study of Aceh problem to shows the reasons of ethnic conflict and the subsequent peace in Aceh. I will continue to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the symbolic politics theory based on the three case studies on the second part. The objective of chapter 7 is to give conclusion on the explanatory power of symbolic politics theory on Aceh war in Indonesia.

## **CHAPTER 7:**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **A. Introduction**

On earlier chapters, I discussed the symbolic politics theory on the case studies. Now I pull it all together how the theory relates to Acehese ethnic conflict and the subsequent peace. This chapter aimed to assess the symbolic politics theory on the Acehese ethnic conflict and the subsequent peace by analyzing the precondition of ethnic conflict through the myths, fears, opportunities, mass hostility, and the hostile mobilization. Thus, the symbolic politic theory would find the importance of it by seeing the pattern of the conflicts and subsequent peace. Symbolic politics theory applied on the three important events of the Acehese conflicts, which are the Acehese conflicts under Soekarno, Soeharto, and after the 1998 reform period. Based on the three case studies, the symbolic politics theory shows its strength in explaining the Acehese problem in Indonesia. Furthermore, this chapter aimed to analyze on the strengths and weaknesses of the symbolic politics theory on the Aceh ethnic conflicts.

#### **B. Assessment of the symbolic politics theory on the Acehese conflicts.**

##### **a. Assessment of the theory on the Acehese conflict under Soekarno period**

The first case study shows that myths justifying hostility (S1) are clearly present and important in the Acehese case, a history of the Aceh war against the colonial Dutch and continue against the Javanese neo-colonial government. The Acehese widely accepted the “Javanese neo-colonial government” as non-believers of Islam or secular nationalist, while the Javanese Indonesian government saw the Acehese was the

stubborn people who did not wanted to adopt the *Pancasila*. The perception that Acehese wanted to change *Pancasila* with an Islamic basis led also to Javanese Indonesian fears of group extinction (S2). The combination of the Acehese stereotypes about the Javanese and violence by Javanese created similar fear on the Acehese side. Opportunity for rebellion (S3) was provided by the difficult terrain and demographic concentration of Acehese in Aceh province; the weak state institutions in regions; the insensitive central government to the local value; the Acehese disappointment toward the Indonesian central government; and the creation of local military of DI/TII. Hostile mass attitudes—negative stereotype—on the Javanese side (S4) were present, as shown by the fact the Acehese insist to implement the Islamic Law of the Jakarta Charter as the Indonesian state basis philosophy was a concrete form of stubborn people. Another example of the myth of stubborn was when the Acehese rejected to be included to the North of Sumatra Province in 1950's. Hostile attitudes on the Acehese side also existed, primarily as a result of fear and resentment rather than hatred. The Acehese fears arise because of the non-believers of Islam (*kaphee*) of Javanese Indonesian government and their military insist to adopt secular nationalist state foundation of *Pancasila*. The Javanese Indonesian government was also troubling behavior that cannot be trusted. It is important to note that this negative image of the Javanese showing the Acehese feelings of hostility were obviously strong and widespread throughout Aceh territory.

Symbolic mobilization (S5) is present on both sides as expected. The mobilization was mainly elite-led process on both sides. For the Javanese side, first covertly, but then overtly in Soekarno's rejection of the Aceh province creation and required Acehese, under the Daud Bereueh leadership, to adopt secular nationalist state foundation of

*Pancasila*. In order to pursue this objective, the Javanese Indonesian military was mobilized by the Soekarno to attack the Acehnese and their elite, especially Daud Bereueh. For the Acehnese, the movement was also elite-led process. The Acehnese elites especially the Aceh Islamic Scholars Association (PUSA, *Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh*), para-military Boy Scout Organization (*Pandu Organisasi*) and Ex-revolutionary Troops of Aceh Veterans (*Bekas Pejuang Aceh*) supported the Daud Bereueh movement, so the counter-elite leading the movement had to rely on their own resources. The *Darul Islam* movement under Kartosuwirjo, instantly played an important role and also became key motivation for the Acehnese to join the movement. The Daud Bereueh movement tried to create a myth of devoted Muslim and Indonesian Islamic state. It implies that they were fighting for their religion and the Muslim community against the secular nationalist regime. Obviously, it was the symbol of Islam that provided a rallying point.

There was an essential security dilemma in Aceh: each side's security efforts threatened the other side. The broad perception of threat on the Acehnese side motivated mass mobilization under the banner of *Darul Islam* movement. At September 20, 1953, Daud Bereueh declared the formation of the Islamic state of Indonesia under the banner of *Darul Islam* movement. At the same time, the declaration of the Islamic State of Indonesia followed by the well-planned attacks by the Boy Scout Organization (*Pandu Organisasi*) and Ex-revolutionary Troops of Aceh Veterans (*Bekas Pejuang Aceh*) to several Indonesian military and police unit posts in most of the district (*Kabupaten*) in Aceh. In September 21, 1953, Daud Bereueh cleverly took the opportunity to mobilize the Acehnese ethnic group to rebel under the banner of *Darul Islam* movement. The



Soekarno's government and their military introduced to restore order quickly by counter-insurgency operations. What drove this security dilemma that led to conflict were the actions of armed groups and the also the provocations of the elites using the myths, fears and chauvinist mobilization against which it took place.

b. Assessment of the theory on the Acehese conflict under Soeharto period

This section aimed to assess the symbolic politics theory on the Acehese ethnic conflict by analyzing the precondition of ethnic conflict through the myths, fears, opportunities, mass hostility, and the hostile mobilization. Thus, the symbolic politic theory would find the importance of it by seeing the pattern of the conflicts.

Myths justifying hostility (S1) are present in the Acehese case on the Soeharto's period. It was the myth of sovereign Aceh state before the Aceh war on March 26, 1873, where the colonial Dutch came to annex the land of Aceh. Di Tiro re-emerge the myth of creation of the Negara Aceh Sumatra (Aceh Sumatra State). He proclaimed Negara Aceh Sumatra on December 4, 1976 and claimed it as a "Successor State" free from Dutch domination and Javanese neo-colonial. Another device was the used of the GAM's flag as a myth-symbol of their pride, glorify of their past, and a symbol of freedom. On the other hand, Soeharto used the myth of *Pancasila* as a symbol of unity of diversity to eliminate any other ideologies that could disrupt his plan to centralize power into his hand only.

This Soeharto force to adopt *Pancasila* led to the Acehese fears of group extinction (S2). Negative stereotype of the Acehese sides also created similar fear on

the Javanese Indonesian side. For example, the stereotype of the Acehnese as rebellious, stubborn, chauvinist, and fundamentalist, is inevitably a source of fear for the Javanese Indonesian side, surely made worse for those whose parties used myth as “the terrorist, the separatist” or GPK. Another example was the used of the *hikayat perang sabil* (the epic of the holy war) by the Acehnese. Di Tiro claimed that *hikayat perang sabil* epics are a holy war against the neo-colonial Javanese side.

Opportunity for rebellion (S3) was provided by the weakness of the Indonesian state, combines with President Soeharto’s centralizing policy in his ruling period, demographic concentration of the Acehnese in Aceh province territory, and the existence of physical training and ideological support from Muammar Qaddafi, the Libyan dictator, in 1987. Hostile mass attitudes on the Javanese side (S4) were also present, as shown by the image of the Javanese were “land grabbers” by sending the Javanese settlers under the transmigration policy. On the other hand, hostile attitudes on the Acehnese side also existed, primarily as a result of fear and resentment. The Javanese Indonesian government controls the media through the Press Act articles 11 to support only the Indonesian government for the unity interest (nationalism). The existence of negative attitudes of Javanese toward the GAM has also been confirmed in media as the Javanese Indonesian government propaganda. They tightly control the media contents.

Symbolic mobilization (S5) is present on both sides as predicted. On the Javanese side, violent mobilization was primarily elite-led process explicitly since the first place. The fact was shown on the 1984 *Pancasila* policy as the sole foundation of the state. The Javanese Soeharto government forced every Indonesian citizen to adopt the *Pancasila*

as the only ideological principles of live regardless their religions, ethnicity, or their region origins. On the Acehnese side, in the similar process, the movement was much more elite-led. The policy raised a Javanese symbolic status above any other symbols as a national symbol. Separatist violence occurred mainly because the GAM elites stood to gain power by promoting separatist violence against the *Pancasila* policy. The Indonesian media was another powerful device for the Javanese by playing on the symbolic issues at stake and stirring up anti-GAM (Acehnese) chauvinism. Instead of seeking compromise, both sides acted to exacerbate the security dilemma.

The Acehnese elites provoked the Acehnese nationalist movement into overreacting, and then used that overreaction to justify further moves toward secession. The Indonesian military provoke the fear of the Indonesian government in purpose to eliminate the GAM's movement by exaggerated the GAM's members. This hyperbolic statement was only to justify their action to immediately implement the DOM in Aceh and create such fear among the Javanese Indonesian society. The consequences were the Acehnese ethnic cleansing because the real power of GAM was not enough to crush the Indonesian military.

In sum, ethnic conflict between the Acehnese and the Javanese Indonesian government under Soeharto regime occurred because of a fundamental clash between the Acehnese myth-symbol complex focused on fears of ethnic (nation) domination and the Javanese one emphasizing the sovereignty and the national integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. Each party defined dominance in Aceh as an important to its national existence and saw the other party aspirations as a threat of group extinction. Aceh

itself thus became, for both parties, a symbol of national aspirations and of the hostility of the other party. The result was a security dilemma and violence, then a politics of nationalist extremism that led to war.

c. The Acehese subsequent peace after the 1998 reform period

This part examines the symbolic politics theory on the Acehese subsequent peace after 1998 reform period. This chapter specifically analyzes the myths, fears, opportunities, and chauvinist mobilization in determining ethnic peace between the Acehese and the Javanese Indonesian central government in the reform period.

Indonesian political and economic crisis in 1997 create chaotic situations and soon it lead to the fall of Soeharto authoritarian regime in 1998. The collapse of Soeharto regime had became a symbol of changes and freedom from an authoritarian regime. At the same time, GAM took advantage of anger, new political openness, and demands for East Timor-style referendum, to rebuild. GAM start to gained more popular support from the Acehese people and even the international society. The present of hostile myths (S1) and fears (S2) are important in the Acehenese peace process.

However, the violence did not escalate because the Javanese Indonesian government and their military chose not to let it; instead of moving on to the next step in the escalation process, continued chauvinist mobilization, Javanese elites react very careful in responding the Acehese provocations. Violent escalation may well have been possible. Nevertheless, the Javanese elites had strong strategic reasons to decrease their oppressive military actions because of the existence of the International community

pressure on the violation of human rights from the foreign countries with their investors and the activists beyond border like the international non-governmental organizations. This pressure led to the next reasons of the Javanese side. They needed the Acehnese economic contribution such as LNG (liquid natural gas) and oil productions, and because of their fears of extinction were softened by the reassertion of the Javanese political control in Indonesia.

The tsunami disaster in December 26, 2004, also played a crucial role as a new symbol of negotiation because both sides lost their people in most of Aceh territory. On the Acehnese side, the tsunami immediately changed GAM's position to separate from Indonesia. The absence of fears of extinction on the Acehnese side and the changes of the Acehnese myths removed the motivation for initiating violence. Marriti Ahtisaari, the mediator and the 2008 peace Nobel Prize winner, was able to convince both sides to agree on mutually win-win solutions. The Javanese side did not use a military approach as usual in facing the new situations in Aceh and thus, this reaction prevented them from fighting back. It implies that the Javanese reassured that their dominance was safe because Aceh territory still on the Indonesia territory. While the Acehnese quickly found that their people and economy resources were protected. Resentments were also manageable, as both sides retained high status in their own eyes: The Javanese maintained their political dominance, while the Acehnese kept their political and economic dominance, and continued to feel culturally superior.

Ethnic conflict would be occurred because of a fundamental conflict between the Acehnese myth-symbols complex focused on fears of ethnic domination and the

Javanese Indonesia government under the transition government period emphasizing the sovereignty and Indonesian national integration and saw the regional aspirations as threat for Indonesian existence. Geographically, Aceh is one of Indonesian unity pride symbol and thus, the Indonesian government insists that Aceh should be inside the Indonesian nation-state at any risk. However, the lack of opportunity to mobilize for the Javanese became a factor of ethnic peace under the Helsinki agreement in 2006. Furthermore, the mass hostility did not appear on the Javanese Indonesian side. Therefore, the ethnic conflict did not arise because the lack of elites manipulation on the politics of the myth and symbol in one side.

In short, the applications of symbolic politics theory on the three important period of time of the Acehese conflicts and subsequent peace had shows the strengths of the theory in explaining the phenomena. The hostile myths (S1) and fears of extinction (S2) were clearly present on the three case studies. Both sides had an enemy image of the other long before the conflicts broke out. Apparently, fears arise because of the political domination from one ethnic group over the other ethnic group.

However, the opportunity to mobilize (S3) was present on the first two case studies, while the opportunity to mobilization on the third case study did not present. Furthermore, the lacks of opportunities did not lead to the hostile mass attitudes (S4). The three case studies show that the elites from the Acehese and the Javanese sides play a very important role in determining the violent (S5). On the first two case studies, the elites from both sides let the violent broke out. While on the last case study, the elites from the Javanese side (government-led) did not counter the provocations and

mobilizations of the Acehnese elites. Therefore, the ethnic conflicts are likely determine by the elites manipulation and provocation toward the hostile myths and fears of extinction from their own ethnic group to create a hostile mass mobilization and eventually, violent was inevitable.

### C. Strengths and weaknesses of the symbolic politics theory

#### a. Strengths of the symbolic politics theory

The symbolic politics theory of ethnic war on the Acehnese ethnic war in Indonesia does usefully account for the outbreak of the conflict and even more can account for peace process. The Acehnese case is interesting because the degree to which every other theory of ethnic war also has some relevance. For example, every responsible account of the Acehnese conflict emphasizes its economic dimensions- the economic competition argument about ethnic war. The factors here include the competition for land between minority ethnic group and the Javanese immigrants on the Aceh territory, the deep poverty of the Acehnese group and the pervasive discrimination against them in the provision of public services, and the general want of economic opportunity for both the Javanese immigrants and the Acehnese.

Applying symbolic politics theory, I found a number of important points in the three cases. In three cases, I found strong myths in the majority group justifying hostility against the minority. I also found significant fears on the majority side—indeed, even stronger on the Javanese Indonesian side, where the fear was of extinction of the entire group. In three cases there was some degree of opportunity for the minority group to mobilize, and the minority group had a territorial base where their group was concentrated. In three cases there were powerful elites, especially on the majority side, who engaged in chauvinist mobilization and mobilizing their followers for violence against the minority group. Most significantly, this chauvinist mobilization in three cases included a big government crackdown against the minority group in response to initial





The creation of *Pancasila* as secular state ideological foundation, the Soekarno's command to include Aceh into the North Sumatra Province and continue by the Soeharto's policy to make *Pancasila* as the sole ideology in Indonesia territory was a source of insecurity for the Acehnese. The Acehnese mobilization was almost entirely driven by fear among ordinary Acehnese; the conflict is not explicable without attention to this factor.

Moreover, the Acehnese inclined to violent resistance had help from Libya under Qadafi leadership, who provided military and ideology training. This help combined with other opportunity factors-the Acehnese demographic concentration- to make the Acehnese resistance possible.

b. Weaknesses of the symbolic politics theory

Although the symbolist explanation is effective, factors overlooked by all of the competing political science explanations also proved important in this case. First, it is significant that the *Darul Islam* and Free Aceh Movement (GAM) self-consciously define themselves as warrior groups. In symbolic politics theory context, their group myths justify any hostility and violence toward the out-groups.

Second, the social structure of the Acehnese groups, though not precisely a cause of the conflict, is nevertheless a critical factor in explaining its dynamics of escalation and de-escalation. As a developing state, patron-client system seems widely used to co-opt the peripheral area like Aceh. The Javanese Indonesian government used a centralization system as a way to co-opt the peripheral Aceh by putting their client

such as the military and Aceh provincial government. However, it is the *ulama* (Islamic scholars) are considered as the leader of Aceh. These *ulama* had sources of power outside the state apparatus. The significant factor in enabling politicians like Daud Bereueh and Hasan di Tiro to mobilize, respectively, the *Darul Islam* and GAM hereditary aristocrats with social power to mobilize supporters. It was this social stratum that helped the GAM to mobilize or to de-mobilize the Acehnese so quickly. In this case, the Acehnese under GAM organization of Hasan di Tiro leadership unite as one ethnic group.

Another important weakness is that there is no specific path in explaining the ethnic conflict based on the symbolic politics theory, especially the elite-led process in Aceh. It seems that the symbolic politic approach tend to be more an elite-led process than the mass-led process. It is because the interactions between the elite and the mass, especially in developing countries, tended to be more elitist than the masses. The elites assumed as the true leader that should be obeyed by the followers because they have the sources of power such as the cultural attachment of aristocratic blood, wealth, or religiosity.

On the case of Aceh conflicts, the interaction between the elites and the masses is based on the patron-client system where the aristocratic elites are extremely influencing the client (the masses). The elites play important roles in manipulating the myths and symbols of the ethnic group or in responding the politics of the myths and symbols of the ethnic group. For example, Hasan di Tiro is the descendant of aristocratic class of the Aceh Sultanate, the international entrepreneur, and at the same times, he also as the *ulama* (Islamic scholar). He is a prefect combination of the patron-client system on

traditional Aceh social structure. In sum, the elites is playing an utmost important role in influencing the ethnic conflict or the ethnic peace like in Aceh ethnic group conflict.

#### D. Implications

A major implication of this research is that ethnic conflict or war is very difficult to prevent. An analysis of hostile myths, fears, opportunity reasons, hostile feelings, and chauvinist mobilization shows why this is so. Myths, fears, opportunity reasons, hostile feelings, and chauvinist mobilization are all reasonable explanations of ethnic conflict or war. Based on the research, the elites from both sides more dominant to use these symbolic politics elements in triggering or preventing the ethnic conflicts. Thus, the symbolic politics theory argues that it is the elites who led the escalation or de-escalation of the ethnic conflicts. The elites utilize the traditional social structure of patron-client system to mobilize the masses to fight in the name of their nations. The implication of this argument is that the symbolic politics theory more focuses on the elite than the mass preferences in ethnic conflicts. In short, these theoretical limitations become a caution for the future research in analyzing the ethnic conflicts.

The future research also should take a closer look at the roles of the masses in escalating or de-escalating ethnic conflicts. The Acehnese roles in Aceh conflicts and subsequent peace are also an important elements in determining the actors the involved in conflicts because these supporters are willing to die in the name of their nations and symbols of the groups. Furthermore, it is the masses that make the ethnic conflicts or war arise and continue even into the most bloodiest war like genocides.

More over, the future research should observe deeper on the interactions between the elites and the masses in the ethnic conflicts. The interactions between the elites

and the masses will result wars or peace situations. Hence, the patterns of the interaction between the elites and the masses are also critical elements in utilizing the symbolic politics of myths, fears, opportunity, hostile feelings, and chauvinist mobilization in escalating or de-escalating conflicts with the other groups.

The situation in Aceh has changed to a great extend, the implications from this analysis must be drawn with carefulness. The Acehnese under Hasan di Tiro leadership is strong as one Acehnese ethnic group. Hasan di Tiro unites all the Acehnese under his leadership. This bond, like later ones, was traceable in part to the myth of Hasan di Tiro as the *Ulama* (Muslim religious leaders) and the descendant of the Aceh Kingdom. Therefore, Hasan di Tiro as the Acehnese Muslim religious leader and the aristocrat is the main element of the disputes and the subsequent peace.

The Indonesian central government strategy of international negotiation that strengthened the GAM position by accommodating GAM's aspirations under Hasan di Tiro leadership with the Indonesian central government at the same time made a cohesive peace deal are very possible, because it meant that accommodation with the rebel group would come at a benefit to GAM's elites and members, in the end as in the beginning, then, the solvency of achieving peace in Aceh stems from the bond of the Acehnese and strong leadership. That popular and unselfish leadership also remains a key successful implementation of Indonesian central government policies for economic development. Interestingly, the GAM under Hasan di Tiro has a strong common Aceh identity that allows the Acehnese ethnic conflicts resolved. Therefore, the future research should take a closer look in other countries that have similar ethnic conflicts and peace conditions like in Aceh, Indonesia.

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